

THE GREATEST FORCE
ON EARTH:

THE POWER OF INTENSIFIED PRAYER

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"A NEW DISCOVERY OF JESUS CHRIST"
"THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST"
"APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY" ETC. ETC.

FOREWORDS

BY THE

REV. H. TYDEMAN CHILVERS

AND THE

REV. SETH JOSHUA



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TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY DEAR WIFE

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FOREWORD

BY THE REV. H. TYDEMAN CHILVERS
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I WELCOME with great pleasure and high hopes of great usefulness, *The Greatest Force on Earth: the Power of Intensified Prayer*. It is a book that must deepen the interest of praying people in the sublime exercise of intensive prayer. We all seem to know much *about* prayer, but the experience of it in its powerful effectiveness Godward and manward is, I fear, greatly lacking.

Dr. Payne has given us a real and authoritative *directory* in this divine and spiritual art of praying, insisting continually on the true and only basis of prayer—the Name and meritorious Mediatorial Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In these following pages we shall find also a great incentive to holiness of life and character, as a means of effectual fervent prayer. The despondent soul will find great encouragement and inspiration to pray as these pages are perused.

May God, by His Holy Spirit, awaken us all to a deeper acquaintance with intensive praying, and make this book a means to stir the slumbering and self-satisfied, to the only God-appointed means for the fulfilment of His purposes in the world. We must give time for prayer and praying—not simply saying prayers

H. TYDEMAN CHILVERS

INTRODUCTION

By THE REV. SETH JOSHUA

NEATH, SOUTH WALES

I HAVE read with care and no little profit, this new work on *The Power of Intensified Prayer*. There is the pulse of life in it, and no serious soul can read it without a spiritual impulse to seek a deeper life of prayer. It contains some of the most powerful illustrations on the prayer-life I have ever read. Dr. Payne has not dwelt so much upon the rules and regulations of the prayer-life, but has taken us back to the Bible, and in a striking manner calls attention to the kind of prayers which God answers. He shows us how it is possible to bring the apostolic prayer-life up to date. His object is not to give the hungry soul an analysis of bread, but the pure bread itself. Readers are made to breathe the breath of prayer as they read.

A book like this cannot be measured in its influence upon the prayer-life of a thoughtful reader. It encourages the heart, it strengthens the spirit of all who are engaged in this spade-work of the churches. "Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches." How few there are who can cut a trench! How

shallow are some of the trenches cut in most of the prayer-life! The depth of the ditch is the measure of expected blessing. "Let some droppings fall on me" is not deep enough for a deep trench digger. How few there are who dig deep enough for "floods upon the dry land"! How is this? All prayer-life is hidden. It is behind a closed door. The best spade diggers go down into deep ditches out of sight. There are numbers of surface workers, but few who in self-oblivation toil in prayer alone with God. Such a book as this gives inspiration; it nerves the believer to greater efforts in the life of intercession.

I wish it God-speed on its heaven-sent mission.

SETH JOSHUA.

PREFACE

THE sincere wish of the writer is that the reader in his perusal of the following chapters on prayer will discover the fact that God has placed at his disposal a force which is infinitely greater than the world has ever yet dreamed. Some of the chapters have taken their rise during times of severe trial as well as seasons of spiritual refreshing. Others are the outcome of years of observation of the marked difference in spiritual impressions made under the preaching of the Word, and other Gospel ministries, in churches and districts where there is the fellowship of Christians who are skilled in the art of prayer, so as to know how to pray with a spirit of intensity. This truth is abundantly revealed and confirmed all through the Bible.

One special object of the writer has been to call attention to some of the most remarkable examples of the power of intensified prayer, both in Old and New Testament Scriptures; though not confined to these alone. There is generally a lack of response to Revivals where there is a lack of the spirit of intensified prayer. By the word "response" we do not mean shouts or rant—although we believe that a little more wholesome enthusiasm in religious circles might be very beneficial. It is admitted in some quarters that

the gift of discernment necessary to perceive the Spirit's grace, and to catch the tone of the Spirit's voice, in what is called "unction" in prayer-life, as well as other God-ordained methods of Revivals, is far stronger in Wales than in most other countries. However this may be, we are certain that whenever there is a spirit of intensified prayer for the salvation of sinners, there is sure to be a hearty response to all genuine Revivals. But if through neglect of prayer, and whole-hearted devotion to God, we have lost this spiritual responsiveness, then let us return to Him in penitent faith and He will certainly restore to us "the years that the locust hath eaten" (Joel ii. 25).

The writer has also endeavoured to show that the only prayers that will prevail with God, create and keep up a spiritual atmosphere in our churches and other spheres of Christian service, are those which take their rise from hearts that are purified by faith in the atoning merits of Jesus Christ.

That God's rich blessing may rest upon this work is our prayer.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE GREATEST FORCE ON EARTH

CHAPTER I

THE POWER OF INTENSIFIED PRAYER

"The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."—ROM. viii. 26 (R.V.).

"THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER TO US-WARD WHO BELIEVE, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead."—EPH. i. 19, 20 (R.V.).

THE mighty power which God has put into the hands of men in the material world is constantly creating fresh surprise, and causing multitudes to wonder what further startling demonstrations of the material forces may yet be expected to take place. Scientists tell us that in every single drop of water in the ocean there is energy enough to generate two thunderstorms. The power is there, silent and hidden, ready at any moment to leap forth and do terrible execution.

One of the most powerful elements in nature that has ever been discovered is radium. Scientists tell us that it is practically an inexhaustible reservoir of

energy. The President of the British Association in 1905 described it as, "perhaps a million times more powerful than dynamite," and he illustrated his remark by a statement to the effect that whereas 12,000 tons of coal are required to drive a ship 6000 miles through the sea at 15 knots an hour, the same effect would be produced by 22 ounces of radium. Fourteen pounds of radium would keep a 50,000-horse-power engine running for a year; 1 ounce would drive one's motor-car during the whole term of one's natural life. A sufficient block would run an Atlantic liner for generations across the ocean. A piece of radium is calculated to continue in full activity for two million years.

These are all statements of leading scientific men of the day. There never was a time in the history of the world when there were so many evidences of existing powers in the material world; and never a time when there was a greater interest taken in discoveries or inventions of some new application of the powers already brought to light. As a rule men are not slow to make use of these combined forces placed at their disposal in the material world, but, alas, how slow we are to make use of the power and blessing which God has placed within our reach in the spiritual world!

It is possible to overrate the power and strength in relation to material forces, but there can be no mistake in this direction in our attempt to explain the greatness of the power of spiritual forces. The difficulty here lies in finding suitable words to express their greatness. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians tried to explain the power which God has

placed at the disposal of believers, but he had to acknowledge that it is EXCEEDING GREATNESS. It is impossible to measure or explain it.

Who can measure or explain resurrection power? From death unto life in the spiritual realm, as well as in the physical, is beyond our thought. There is no power in the material universe that can approach it. Even the power of radium is infinitely behind it. Neither can we measure nor explain rightly the power in relation to prayer force: that is, intensified prayer when wrought in the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost. But we can read of mighty things which have been accomplished by its power in the past history of the Church and of the world, and of what our forefathers did by its mighty force in their day.

As one great writer expressed it, the prayer of faith is mightier than any dynamite, for it has the almightiness of God linked to it. It reaches round the world. It can touch the highest Heaven or shake the lowest Hell. Prayer is a Jacob's ladder with God's angels ascending and descending, taking up the petitions and bringing down the answers. Prayer may be as simple as a baby's cry, as eloquent as a tear, as secret as a heart pang, as swift as the lightning, as mighty as the tornado, as strong as love, and as divinely human as the Christ of God.

Prayer is only real prayer when inspired by Him and His Spirit. He has mastered but little of prayer who knows but little of the Spirit-groaning which cannot be uttered. No matter how great our petition, His promise is always "exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think." We also know that which we have proved again and again of its power and reality

in our own lives, and what we have witnessed of its power among others.

The late Rev. T. G. SELBY, a very eminent saint and noted preacher and writer, calling attention to the fact that believers are the only channels for the transmission of spiritual force, says, "Some of the material forces of the universe can only be manifested through the special elements and agencies that are adapted to transmit them. Electricity must have a pathway of susceptible matter over which to travel, even if that pathway be one of indefinitely minute particles of ether only. So with the spiritual forces of the universe. If the power of the mediatorial presence has no conducting lines along which to travel, it must sleep for ever, and the world be left to swing in its old grooves of evil and death. The manifestation of all the energies of that presence can only come through the believing request of the disciples. Prayer, bound only by the human instincts of the faith that inspires it, and the rights of the Name in which it is presented, is a thing of illimitable power."

Dr. COURTLAND, who is considered to be one of the world's greatest and most renowned scientists, claims that: "Prayer is the mightiest force in the universe," and that the Christian world is blind to the fact. Judging by what is already accomplished, we have to acknowledge that if prayer is anything it is everything; if it is true, it is the greatest truth.

The Rev. J. A. MORGAN, Vicar of St. John's, Deritend, Birmingham, declared that, "True prayer is the Holy Ghost praying through us back to God." This statement is quite in harmony with the Apostle's teaching when he says, "The Spirit Himself maketh

intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26), which reveals the truth that it is not simply the power or influence of the Spirit, but rather the Holy Spirit Himself. While not setting aside our responsibility, He kindles the desire, begets the prayer, and also "maketh intercession for the saints according to the Will of God" (Rom. viii. 27). It is this glorious fact that makes the true prayer of the righteous the greatest force on earth.

As we recognise that the Holy Spirit Himself inspired the Apostle to utter these words in his prayer: "The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe," there is no room left for us to doubt the fact that prayer-force when wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit is the Greatest Force on Earth. Power that exceeds greatness in any sphere is beyond the region of human conception, but how much more when we think of the greatness of power, in relation to the Almighty! We may admit this in the abstract—His ability to create untold worlds in a moment of time if He chose—but here we discover that it is the exceeding greatness of His power in the subjective. Yes! even at our disposal, "*to us-ward who believe.*"

This is still more encouraging when we consider that the exceeding greatness of His power may be received by us to advantage in the prayer-life. He, Himself, really comes to "make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." O brethren, is not this an exceedingly great condescension on the part of the blessed and eternal Spirit—thus to help our infirmities, and to teach us how to pray intensely so as to prevail! Surely such exceeding greatness of His power to *us-ward* is past our comprehension and all our powers

of expression. Nor can we measure its wonderful possibilities, especially when the Spirit of grace and supplication is allowed to have the complete control of our prayer-life.

Then we may settle it in our minds once and for ever that prayer-force—that is, if it is to be the greatest force on earth—is not worked-up force, physical, or material force of any kind, but a force that is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit Himself; after the manner of the experience of Paul when he exclaimed, "Which worketh in me mightily" (Col. i. 29). And we may reckon that the workings of His mighty power in prayer and intercession in the divinely anointed soul is mightier than the power of dynamite, or lyddite, or radium, or any other power, intellectual or material. God does not look at the length or breadth or the polish of our prayers. He looks and listens to the Spirit's voice reproduced in us and through us. The Holy Spirit has a Voice that is distinguishable from all other voices by His sympathetic tones.

The sainted FRANK CROSSLEY of the Star Hall, Manchester, described this distinguishing feature of the Spirit's grace, in all who have received it, as a sanctified, or spiritual tone. Our Lord Himself, when instructing His disciples, said, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which is in you" (Matt. x. 20).

It is said that the secret of the success of that great preacher, GEORGE WHITEFIELD, was not so much his extraordinary sermons, but rather the spiritual tone and unction in which he preached them. When in the fulness of the Spirit he would utter the word "Oh!", the power of conviction would be so great

that at times sinners would fall by hundreds, helpless to the ground, as if smitten by the hand of death. This is what St. Jude meant when speaking of the ministry of prayer, as praying in the Holy Ghost.

Such were the prayers of JOHN KNOX, when in the fulness of the Spirit he would pray all night in agonising tones, "Lord, give me Scotland or I die." God heard the voice of his supplications and shook Scotland in answer to his prayers. This is what the Vicar of Madeley, the Rev. JOHN FLETCHER, meant when he being asked what was to be experienced in the full accomplishment of the promise of the Father, replied, "Oh! what shall I say . . . the Spirit maketh intercession in the soul like a God wrestling with a God." Oh that we knew better how to pray in the Holy Ghost, and to rely absolutely upon Him for utterance! What wonders would be wrought in the Church in answer to our prayers! He knows the kind of prayer that will prevail with our Heavenly Father. He knows the kind of prayer that will bring about a world-wide revival. His eyes still run to and fro in the earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward Him. (Lord, teach us to pray; and inspire us to expect greater things.) It is true, as expressed by one whose name we have already mentioned, we ask for toys when we should ask for continents, and be claiming the world for Christ.

Intensified prayer, when offered through the atoning merits of Jesus Christ and in reliance upon the Holy Spirit, is as the putting forth of vital energy and is considered to be the highest effort of which the human spirit is capable, and becomes an irresistible force. When we consider its wonderful possibilities and

our own responsibilities in relation to our souls, we are overwhelmed with the thought of it. (O God! pour down a flood of divine illumination on the soul of the writer so that he may be able to stir up the souls of others in order that they may be able to realise the importance of this duty, and thereby create a spiritual awakening such as shall bring everlasting glory to Him who is the Author and Inspirer, as well as the Hearer and Answerer of prayer.)

If the Church fully realised the power of this grace and knew the experience of its divine operation, nothing would be impossible to her, because she would possess the key of Heaven's unspeakable treasures, and would be mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. As rightly expressed by Dr. ANDREW MURRAY: "We must begin to believe that God, in the mystery of prayer, has entrusted us with a force that can move the Heavenly world, and can bring its power down to earth."

CHARLES H. SPURGEON remarked on one occasion that the "power of prayer can never be overrated. They who cannot serve God by preaching need not regret. If a man can but pray he can do anything. He who knows how to overcome with God in prayer has Heaven and earth at his disposal."

GOSSNER, the humble pastor of Bethlehem Church in Berlin, relied on prayer more than any other force. It was said of him that he prayed mission stations into being, and missionaries into faith; he prayed open the hearts of the rich, and gold from the distant lands. Before his life ended he had sent forth one hundred and forty-four missionaries, and usually had no less than twenty of them depending directly upon him for

support. "Prayer," says one of our ablest writers on this vital subject, "is a spiritual law which co-operates with the mind of God. It has more in it than merely petition. It clothes itself in reality and power, with the force of God Himself. It is an attitude of spirit and mind. Language is secondary in true prayer."

We shall discover, as we proceed, that prayer is not only the greatest force on earth, but the greatest privilege on earth. Prayer is a means by which we may call in the intervention of the Almighty God and obtain instant deliverance in times of danger and sudden temptation. Prayer has been called the outlet of trouble and the inlet to comfort. Prayer is like a window in the soul by which we can let out that which is oppressive and let in that which is pure and refreshing. It is a medium by which we can let in the light, which will put out the darkness. Prayer is also a means by which we can hold fellowship with other Christians, and unite with them in making our appeal to God on behalf of the Church and the world.

All good things in Heaven and earth, and all the exceeding great and precious promises by which they may be obtained, are opened to the grasp of consistent persevering prayer. It is a further privilege that prayer, especially when "in the Holy Ghost," brings the soul into a clear atmosphere, because it brings us into fellowship with God Himself, "in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 John i. 5), and, "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from

all sin" (1 John i. 7). Our Lord said, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7).

It is plain, therefore, that without any attempt to go beyond what is written, if we are to pray consistently and successfully, we must abide in the clear light of holiness; as saith the Apostle, "For what communion hath light with darkness." The two things are incompatible; you cannot at the same time have holiness and sin (see 2 Cor. vi. 14 to end of chapter).

As a compensation for consistent persevering prayer on the lines of truth and righteousness, the three Hebrew children were sustained in the burning fiery furnace, and were brought out of it, without having even the smell of fire upon them (Dan. iii. 20, 27). And multitudes since their day have been called to pass through the fiery trials of sorrow and persecution, slander and afflictions; but God, in answer to their intensified prayers "in the Holy Ghost," sustained them, and so kept them by His power that the flame did not kindle upon them, nor the waters overflow them.

In her last days Mrs. BOOTH of the Salvation Army sent this message to her friends—it is a triumphant death-song: "The waters are rising, but so am I. I am not going under, but over. Do not be concerned about your dying. Only go on living well, and the dying will be all right." Doubtless when the roll is called up yonder, a mighty army of saints will join the song of the ransomed, in praise to Him who in answer to their fervent prayers supplied them with grace sufficient to "glorify Him in the fires," and

be able to witness, as expressed in the lines of the poem:

"He brought me through the scorching fire,
Altho' the flame waxed hotter, higher!
Yet, lo! what did those flames for me
But burned my bonds and set me free;
Thus through it all I learned to sing
The power and wisdom of my King."

L. A. BARTER SNOW.

It was in answer to the power of intensified prayer that God sent an earthquake and shook the foundations of the prison at Philippi, and not only brought Paul and Silas out of the inner prison but filled their souls to overflowing with songs of praise, and saved the jailor and his household, and gave birth to a church in a new centre.

"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things to come; and concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me" (Isa. xlv. 11). If we rightly consider the character of the One who uttered these words, we may reverently conclude that actual authority is given (especially to those who pray "in the Holy Ghost" and through the atoning merits of Christ) for the right to believe that prayer is the one power on earth whereby we may command the Almighty. Or, as expressed by one writer, "Prayer is the power on earth that commands the Power in Heaven."

We are reminded that in launching an ironclad, the pressure of a baby's finger is not infrequently required to put into operation the ponderous machinery by which the iron leviathan glides evenly and majestically on to the ocean wave. So, if we may dare to

say it, all the purposes of God, and the providential machinery by which they were to be executed, stood in suspense until the chosen people had asked for the things which He had promised and had even commanded Him concerning the work on which His heart was set. It is also admitted that "the Divine gauge of the worth of prayer is its pressure on the heart of God." "Concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me."

Mr. Spurgeon remarks that this is a wonderful expression, and calls upon us to rise to the sublimity of faith and be daring with our God. It is considered that our Lord used this tone when He said, "Father, I will"; and we shall discover that Moses used the same sublime daring when he stood in the breach, and in his supplication on behalf of Israel, prayed, "Forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy Book which Thou hast written." Joshua rose to the same sublimity of faith and daring when, in the supreme moment of his triumph, he lifted his spear towards the setting sun and cried, "Sun, stand thou still." Elijah used the same sublimity of faith and daring when he shut up the heavens for three years and six months and again opened them. Yet, as well said by one, "After our greatest deeds of prayer and faith, we shall ever lie low before God; as Elijah did, who, after calling fire from Heaven, prostrated himself on the ground with his face between his knees."

It is likewise true if we have the intense desire that our prayers take rank with the mighty intensified prayers of those Old Testament saints, that we purpose calling attention to, then, as in their case, we must

not be surprised if our prayers cost us real soul agony, if not blood and tears. But the love of God and the price paid by the awful tragedy of the Cross, and the needs of a dying world demand it. Therefore without further delay let us cross the Rubicon of doubt, cut the shore line of all carnal indulgences, and learn how to "pray in the Holy Ghost"; and, in the strength of Almighty God, the victory shall be ours.

CHAPTER II

ABRAHAM'S PRAYER ON BEHALF OF SODOM

"But Abraham stood yet before the Lord . . . and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"—GEN. xviii. 22, 23.

WHATEVER there may be to be proud of at the present day with reference to the world's progress in science and art compared with former ages, we have to admit that the Church has been slow to improve upon the examples of Old Testament saints in the power of intensified prayer. Their prayers are still looked upon as the outstanding wonder of all the ages.

In the study of the characters of some of these Old Testament heroes there are three things of which they seem to have had considerable knowledge. Firstly, they knew how to repent; secondly, they knew how to pray; and, thirdly, they knew how to make the best of their failures, as well as the most of their victories. And it would seem that their genuine repentance, as well as their faith, lay at the foundation of all their success. When they repented they burnt the bridges behind them. Perhaps they had discovered that where provision was made for the flesh or for some cherished idol or some sinful indulgence to fall back upon, it meant complete failure in the prayer-

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life (Josh. vii. 1-13; Ps. lxvi. 18). There is no reason, when, under the influence of God's Spirit, we peruse the victorious prayer-life of these Old Testament saints and others, why we may not gather inspiration and encouragement so as to expect to realise greater victories in our own individual prayer-life.

Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, is considered to be a remarkable example of the power of prevailing prayer. This we may gather from the manner of his pleading on behalf of Sodom. It is written that "Abraham drew near." This statement goes to the very root of the matter and explains more than anything else the real secret of his power in prayer. Had he failed to draw near to God, his petitions, however earnest or lucid, would have been nothing better than a lifeless form and not as it was—a living vital force. The power and victory that are possible in drawing near to God through prayer are indescribable. In fact, the joy and blessedness of Divine Communion when brought into close contact with God are often so far beyond human expression that our very Hallelujahs seem to fall infinitely short of the joy of it. There are infinite approaches to God even after we have entered the narrow way—not nearness of being, but of character, and nearness of affinity, of love, of faith, of communion and conformity to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, and more likeness to Him in the ministry of intercession. It is possible to be so taken up with our standing in Christ as to lose sight of the privilege of our approaching in likeness to Him. The path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more, unto the perfect day. Then let us take care that we are not found standing when we should be walking,

or walking when we should be running, or even running, when upon the wings of faith we should be soaring.

Another secret of Abraham's success in prevailing prayer was his deep humility of spirit. He considered himself to be but dust and ashes. And let us remember that Abraham at this time was about one hundred years old. Besides this, he was in the Covenant which God had promised to establish to him and his seed after him. Therefore he might have felt justified in urging his plea upon the ground of his position as the chosen of God. But instead of this he confessed that he was "dust and ashes." Abraham, without the advantage of any material temple or written form of worship or the privilege of an open Bible, such as we enjoy, was nevertheless able to meet all the requirements of God in such a manner as to be admitted into His own Council Chamber, where he had the privilege of pleading in soul contact with his God (Gen. xviii. 17).

With reference to Abraham's example in prayer on behalf of Sodom, Mrs. M. Baxter says: "When prayer is intense, we come to close quarters with God; it is no time for finely formed sentences; the fine music of ritualistic services has no place here, where real, intense business is transacted with God. 'Nothing between' is the heart's cry. 'I must have to do with my God face to face.'" Abraham drew near, and God did not repel him, or show him any aloofness: the man was sure of his affair, because God was sure of him: heart touched heart. And Abraham attempted to turn God from His purpose. "Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Every petition he offered received an answer, neither was the presence of the mercy of God withdrawn so long

as he continued to pray and to make intercession; which proves that it was possible for even Abraham to have been more intense and to have gone further with his petitions.

Whenever there are limitations, and we fail to reach the highest possibility in the prayer-life, the fault is always on the human side and never on the divine. We get a remarkable picture of this, only under rather different circumstances, when the prophet Elisha commanded Joash to take a bunch of arrows and smite the ground with them. "He smote three times and stayed" (2 Kings xiii. 18, 19). The prophet was deeply grieved in spirit and said, "Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it, whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." It is evident that God had intended to give him several signal victories to the complete overthrowing of Syria; but, through lack of perseverance, Joash gave in just at the point of a splendid final victory. And, oh! beloved brethren, is not this the cause of much of the failure and disappointment in our prayer-life and revival effort at the present day? How often has it happened that, when a splendid opportunity has been given for the winning of some glorious victory for Christ and His Kingdom, through the lack of perseverance or the want of knowing how to make the most of the victory, we have failed to rise to the occasion! Let us endeavour always to have a clear and definite aim in our petitions to the Throne of Heavenly Grace, and look for a victory such as is worthy of God. But, as rightly expressed, "this cannot be done unless we concentrate all our strength and desires into every stroke of our prayers.

The strongholds of sin and Satan and error will not yield at soft indefinite blows and soulless petitions."

No doubt the chief reason why Abraham discontinued his request was because he fully expected that ten righteous men could be found in the city. Otherwise it is possible he would have continued in prayer until the whole of the city was saved. One writer has said, "We think that it is great boldness thus to urge the majesty of Heaven, but we much mistake the God we pray to. He loves to be intreated and commands us to be urgent."

It is rather remarkable that while communion with God, which is the principal part of prayer, had continued more or less from the time of Adam onward, yet the word "prayer" does not appear on the inspired page until years later, when it will be seen that the first time that either the word of prayer or divine healing occurs is in connection with Abraham (Gen. xvii. 3; Gen. xx. 17.). Then on each occasion we find that his prayers were answered on the very spot. In consideration of Abraham's success in the ministry of intercession, we would conclude that his unshaken faith in the Almighty must have brought a measure of the power of Omnipotence into his prayers. Indeed Abraham's faithfulness is recognised all through both Old and New Testament Scriptures. He is made mention of by Nehemiah in his prayers, who said, "Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham, and foundest his heart faithful before Thee, and madest a covenant with him" (Neh. ix. 7, 8). And Paul the Apostle testifies, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted

unto him for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 3). This, we believe, was the true reason why God was able to take him into His Council Chamber and make known to him His purpose to overthrow the cities of the plain; as it is written, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" It is evident that Abraham would not have known of Sodom's destruction but for this revelation; therefore he would not have been able to have prevailed in prayer for them. But one asks, Why did He make it known to Abraham? Because he was the chosen head of His people; because through him all the nations of the earth should be blessed, because Abraham was a faithful and righteous man; and finally with a view that he might intercede for Sodom. This justifies us in interceding for sinners, and even though there were not enough righteous men to save the city, yet Abraham's prayer was effectual in the deliverance of Lot and his daughters; so that God remembered Lot for Abraham's sake (Gen. xix. 29).

Dr. Murray says, "Intercession is the most perfect form of prayer. It is the prayer Christ ever liveth to pray on His throne." Doubtless one chief reason why Lot did not join in this ministry of intercession with Abraham was because he lacked the divine fellowship; therefore he had not the capacity to enter into this glorious ministry. Prayer and fellowship with God went hand-in-hand with Abraham, and it must be so with us if we expect our prayers to be effective.

The whole history of the Church proves that it is those who live in the closest fellowship with God to whom He reveals His mind. Abraham had fulfilled all the conditions that were necessary. As a result,

God was well pleased to draw out from him the intensity of his prayers on behalf of Sodom. The most godly are always the most powerful both in prayer and in intercession, for the reason that they, like Abraham, keep most in touch with God; therefore they have a greater knowledge of His love, power, mercy, and justice, and have a heart at leisure to think on behalf of others.

But what a contrast to this do we find in the case of Lot! Although a child of God, he manifested a very different spirit from that of his uncle, Abraham. No agonising prayer is offered by him on behalf of the doomed city. No display of godly sympathy for the perishing multitude; no mention of gratitude for his safe deliverance. What little praying he did was all centred in himself, and had it not been for the intercession of Abraham, it is possible that both he and his daughters would have perished with the others. But, as it was, he was saved, as by fire.

Had God found the same spirit of faith and whole-hearted devotion in Lot as was in the heart of his uncle, Abraham, it is possible that Sodom would have been saved. And who knows but that there may be a thousand cities in this the twentieth century just as corrupt as the "cities of the plain." Yet if the condition of the heathen at home and abroad was even a thousand times worse, the promise of God and His redeeming grace would be equal to the occasion. "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8). This promise, although given to Christ, can be applied by the Holy Spirit to the Church. It comes to her as a challenge on the

ground of the Father's promise to His Son, so she can "demand" of Him as the Almighty Father to fulfil it. To say the least, such a promise is not only an encouragement to our faith, but an everlasting rebuke to our narrow views and our limited petitions, because the promise practically embraces the world for Christ.

Just now, as in Abraham's day, God is looking for men whom He can take into His confidence—men who know how to pray in faith and in the Holy Ghost. Dr. Cuyler uttered a great truth when he said, "Nearly every revival starts with one or more souls that are filled with the Holy Ghost." And as one of our leading Church dignitaries prayed, "O Holy Ghost, fill but one or two hearts with Thy rushing mighty wind, and mitre one or two brows with the pentecostal flame." To which we heartily say, "Amen."

During one of his missions the writer came into touch with a minister of the Gospel whom he had heard preach with great power and unction. But upon hearing him pray and make intercession (especially in his private room and at his family altar), he forgot all about the minister's ability as a preacher, in the blessed realisation of God's presence in answer to his prayers. He felt fully convinced that the prayers of any two such men, when united, "would put ten thousand to flight," or possibly start a revival, the influence of which might be felt to the uttermost parts of the earth, and gladden the heart of the Saviour in the conversion of multitudes of the poor heathen. It is hardly possible to come into contact with such, without feeling a deeper sense of one's own responsibility. Many who came in contact with such men as John Fletcher, Charles Finney and George Müller, and others of their

stamp, have confessed to this. And we have cause to thank God for such men and women who exist to-day. And the reason we have not more of the same class is not for want of greater light or better opportunity. The privileges in these respects were never greater.

If the standard of judgment in our Saviour's day was the greater light and opportunity than that of former days, which is evident, as when our Lord upbraided the cities and said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! . . . and thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (Matt. xi. 21, 23), then, in the consideration of the greater light and privileges granted to us in these days, we would reverently ask (judging according to our deserts),—Could we expect any other if our Lord returned to-day, than to hear Him say to us as a nation, "Woe unto you, England," or, "Woe unto you, Great Britain, so long entrusted with the light of divine truth; for if the mighty works done in thee had been done in Africa, in India, in China, or in Japan, etc., they would have repented long ago"? Surely we have cause to be grateful that God has not entered into judgment with us. Yet, as remarked by a well-known writer, "There is hope, for God has not forgotten us. The great Intercessor is still in Heaven pleading; and the Holy Ghost is still in the world."

Then, in view of our present privileges and in the light of the coming judgment, let us in the spirit of true penitence and faith call upon God in earnest prayer that we may be raised to the occasion, and as we offer up our petitions in reliance upon the Holy

Spirit and through the atoning merits of Christ, He will grant our request and pour out upon us in greater and richer abundance the spirit of grace and supplication, which always fits the soul for the ministry of intercession.

And who can tell how many towns and cities have been saved, in answer to the prevailing prayers of God's people, since the time that Abraham interceded on behalf of Sodom, from a moral and spiritual destruction which may be infinitely greater than that of a temporal nature. It is said that at the time when President C. G. Finney visited Bolton, Lancashire, the whole town was completely overwhelmed with sin and vice of every kind, and that gross darkness covered the minds of the people. But during the revival which took place under the ministry of Mr. Finney, and the united prayers and intercessions of the Christians, the whole town was brought under such a wave of divine influence that almost in every house, some one or more was converted to God.

Hudson Taylor asks :

"Should we not do well to suspend our present operations and give ourselves to humiliation and prayer for nothing less than to be filled with the Spirit, and made channels through which He shall work with resistless power? Souls are perishing *now* for lack of this power. . . . God is blessing *now* some who are seeking this blessing from Him in faith. All things are ready if we are ready."

"In Abraham's God confide,
Who faithful souls prepares,
And with the Holy Spirit's might
Intensifies our prayers."

The following testimony reveals the power of intercessory prayer in a very remarkable manner. An infidel in London had a wife who possessed a Bible, which she read daily. Being annoyed at this, he threw the Book upon the fire; then went out. He afterwards returned to see if the last vestige of the volume had disappeared. The woman, who was naturally distressed at the loss, said she thought it must be completely destroyed. Her husband stirred the ashes to see if such was the case, when he read what fastened itself upon his mind and led to his conversion, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away." The sister of that man was the wife of a London pastor, and just when the Bible was burning she was earnestly praying for her brother's conversion.

"Is it true," asked Canon Liddon, "that prayer is assumed little else than half-passive play of sentiment, which flows languidly on through the minutes and hours of easy reverie?" Let those who have really prayed give the answer. Such sometimes describe prayer, like the Patriarch Jacob, as a wrestling together with the Unseen Power, which may last not infrequently in an earnest life, late into the night hours, or even until break of day. They have, when praying, their eyes fixed on the Great Intercessor in Gethsemane, upon the drops of blood which fell to the ground in that agony of resignation and sacrifice. Importunity is of the essence of successful prayer.

CHAPTER III

JACOB HAD POWER OVER THE ANGEL,
AND PREVAILED

"I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me."—GEN. xxxii. 26.

"Yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication."—Hos. xii. 4.

MANY of God's children have confessed that after years of religious exercise they knew or understood but little of what it really meant to agonise in prayer, either for themselves or for others, until brought face to face with some great trial or calamity. Then were they greatly surprised when, for the first time, they discovered what little they knew of the spirit and power of "fervent effectual prayer." Doubtless for this reason God has often to allow some trouble or affliction to come over men's lives in order that He may be able to draw them out into a real spirit of prevailing prayer. Had it not been for this special trial and crisis which was permitted to overtake Jacob, it is possible that he would never have been changed from a supplanter to a Prince in Israel. It is evident that true prayer puts the heart into the best condition for the enduring of our troubles as well as for the exercise of our faith for complete and final victory.

For over twenty years Jacob and Esau were at variance. But now the command came from God to

Jacob to return to his own land, to the place where his brother Esau dwelt. A tree that has been steadily growing for twenty long years is likely to get firmly rooted. And we may reckon that the root of bitterness and the spirit of enmity that had been growing in the heart of Esau for so long must have become very strong and stubborn. It had grown from the feeling of anger to that of malice and murder. He had said on a former occasion, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob" (Gen. xxvii. 41). Therefore we are able to understand to some extent the awful sense of despair and self-retribution that must have taken possession of Jacob, especially when he received the command to return to his own land. No doubt, he could already see the dark shadow of his brother's approach. To take steps in that direction would be to afford Esau just the opportunity he had long waited for in order to carry out his threat, which would mean to Jacob the suffering of a cruel death. With feelings such as these gnawing at his heart, we would think he must have felt strongly tempted to disobey the command. But, notwithstanding all his temptation and his fears, he is resolved to go forward in the path of duty.

After due preparation he set out on his journey, but only a few days pass before he is brought face to face with a fearful crisis—a crisis which is immortalised through the whole history of the Church. "Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men." Possibly as they marched forward they more likely gave the appearance of four thousand. What a tumult of thought must have been created in the breast of Jacob when the

hostile host came within sight! Nothing can be more natural than to suppose that Esau fully intended to carry out his threat. Doubtless the aggravating event relating to Jacob's trickery and duplicity had gained strength with Esau, and had grown rapidly upon him during the whole length of the march. And, considering he is the leader and commander of his band of soldiers, he must have regard for his position. Besides, had not the prospect of victory been running high among rank and file of his devoted followers; and can he afford to cut off the hope of their expectation by manifesting a relenting or forgiving spirit? What will be said on their return? No! he must rally every opposing force of his nature and close down the door of his iron-like soul to every feeling of compassion, and put on the determined face, so as to appear with a warlike front and keep rank. Tramp, tramp, tramp, they march forward on their journey, fully resolved to wipe out the very name of Jacob and his followers for ever.

Without doubt, Jacob had had his times of self-reproach, but never a time like the present. I fancy he would say to himself, "I am to blame for all this. Too well do I remember my brother's disappointment when he found that I had not only robbed him of his birthright, but had also taken away his blessing. And now my family, together with all my innocent followers, have to suffer because of my guilt. I own that I deserve to be wiped out and my name blotted out for ever." Who can tell what feelings of remorse and consternation wrung the soul of Jacob when he saw the two bands rapidly approaching? And now, as they came within a stone's-throw of each other, lo,

Esau, as if suddenly seized with a spirit of impatience to have his revenge upon his brother, ran to meet him. What indescribable horror must now enter the minds and hearts of Jacob's party! Surely they expect no other than to see him fall a victim to his brother's rage. When, to the astonishment of both parties, Esau falls on his brother Jacob's neck, and kisses him. "And they wept."

What power on earth, we ask, could have brought about a change like this? Compared with this the changing of the order of the material universe is as nothing. Only one answer can be given, and that is the omnipotency of prayer. In other words, Jacob's deliverance is the result of the operation of God's power in answer to his effectual fervent prayer. The following prayer offered by Jacob on the previous night is the best explanation of this remarkable victory:

"And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. . . . And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he pre-

vailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there" (Gen. xxxii. 9-29).

We do not know of any word that more fully expresses the prayer of Jacob than the word—intense. It is evident in this case that God allowed Jacob in his prayer to stretch out more strainedly until all the guile was completely taken out of his nature. Not only so, but under the power of God, Jacob was able to pray and to hold on just so long as the strain was necessary, and that too in a very successful manner, otherwise it would never have been recorded, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Thus Jacob, who represented the lowest type of manhood, was suddenly raised to the highest place of power and dignity, and named Israel. The prophet Hosea, referring to this occasion, speaks of Jacob's prayer as a spiritual exercise, and not, as some suppose, merely physical. Hence it is recorded that "he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him" (Hos. xii. 4).

Some tell us that Jacob did not wrestle at all;

others say that he wrestled too long and put himself under too great a strain. The fault, however, with too many of our prayers is the fact that they are so very brittle that they break off long before they get to straining point. Some who know little or nothing about agonising prayer say God does not require it. Then it is certain He does not require our indolence or laziness.

It is said of a certain youth, being in the temple with Alexander, that, when offering incense to his god, a coal fell from the golden censer on to the youth's hand and burnt his wrist. The youth, considering what a sacred thing he was about, although he felt his wrist burning, yet would not stir, but continued to the end. Ought not this to shame those who sometimes allow mere trifles to break off their communion with God?

We may learn, however, from Jacob's prayer that the place of man's extreme weakness is the place of God's supreme power, as well as that it affords a place for divine opportunity. So very few are willing to be brought to a place of utter helplessness so as to learn like Jacob the uselessness of attempting to get the victory in our own strength. It is far easier for human nature to rely upon human might or wisdom than to come to a place of self-abasement and be willing that God alone shall be our deliverer. Paul, no doubt, had reached this point in his experience, when he exclaimed, "The sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Cor. i. 9).

It was indeed a great miracle of mercy for Jacob when the Lord, in answer to his prayer, changed the

whole spirit and purpose of his brother Esau towards him, so that suddenly matters were made right between them. But the display of God's power in the sanctification of Jacob's inner life, in the taking away, as it were, the twist out of his nature, far outranked the former transaction, because in this, the latter case, it removed the real cause of all the trouble and raised him to the position of a prince, a ruler with God, and so transfigured his life that ever afterward Jacob remained a superior man.

It is here, more especially, where the victory on the divine side comes in. One touch of the Almighty's grace when Jacob came into vital contact with Him immediately withered up all his subtlety and carnality. Up to this time, Jacob's chief supplication was, "Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother." But the Lord led him to see that his greatest need was to be delivered from his deceitful self—the Jacob, the supplanter, the schemer. We repeat, it is more than likely that circumstances had been allowed to lead up to the highest point in the experience of Jacob in order to induce him to make a full and glad surrender and to afford an opportunity for a work to be wrought in his heart that would be a greater praise to the triumph of the Redeemer's grace than if He had created a new world. This we may gather from the fact that on three occasions, when reference is made to the above transaction, He, the Lord, is spoken of as the mighty God of Jacob (see Gen. xlix. 24; Ps. cxxxii. 2 and 5). Thus all the glory of this wonderful operation both in the inward and the outward deliverance of Jacob is ascribed, as it should be, to the Lord Himself.

There has been a time in the experience of most of us

when, if the name of Jacob was mentioned, we were tempted to look upon him as no other than a trickster, a supplanter, or, as one who had taken advantage of his brother, and possessing guile enough to have played the same trick upon a thousand others were the opportunity given. But now, since we have learnt to look upon him from the transfigured side of his character, we see a man radiant with the presence of God.

Some we have known appear to be so well acquainted with the faults and failings of their brethren that they have failed to discover or to recognise the nobler qualities possessed by such men as Jacob, and others of his type. Nor would they trouble themselves to know anything about the spiritual struggles, or the days and nights spent by such in agonising prayer in order to get a complete victory over their faults. And should they by some means get to hear of such a victory, the possibility is that it will soon be forgotten. So that in vain, as far as they are concerned, has a Jacob, a David, or a Peter emerged triumphant in his struggles. The worldly, the lukewarm Christian, will still point to the dark shadow that has passed. But it is to be feared that many of this class have never experienced a real spiritual Waterloo in their lives. That is to say, they have never been brought under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit in a way so as to lay violent hands on their own pride and sloth and unbelief, or sought to put to death the Agag of their own hearts. Possibly, they have never spent a solid half-hour in real agonising prayer since the day they were born. Satan is quite aware of this and can therefore afford to let them alone, whereas he will bring

his heaviest artillery to bear upon those who are skilled in the weapon of prevailing prayer. As a matter of fact he will not leave a stone unturned in order, if possible, to overthrow the faith of such as have joined the ranks of spiritual intercessors. But, God be praised, the prayers of such as approach God through faith in the Redeemer's merits, and in reliance upon the Holy Spirit, shall come off more than conquerors.

Some one asked the Rev. Dinsdale Young if it was possible for any one who had sinned as David did to be called a man after God's own heart. "Yes," said Mr. Young, "if he repents like David." The same is true with reference to Jacob.

We have a remarkable reference to the reward of faithfulness in this duty given in Hosea, namely, "Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints" (Hos. xi. 12). Dr. Adam Clarke, in his commentary on the above verse, says, "There is an allusion here to Gen. xxxii. 24, when Jacob wrestled with the angel and his name was changed to Israel, one that ruleth with God. That glory Israel lost through idolatry, but Judah still retains the true worship, and so deserves the name Israel." It is evident, however, that Jacob as an individual retained the name Israel, and was not a whit behind the mightiest of God's intercessors, and because of this, his success in the power of prevailing prayer, his God-given name Israel is left on everlasting record. "Jacob, with all his mistakes," says the late C. H. Spurgeon, "was a master in the art of prayer." We talk about our battles of Waterloo, Sebastopol, Mons, the Somme, etc., but the spiritual battles won at Jabbok, Mount

Carmel, Gethsemane, and other places, like the Upper Room Prayer-meeting, have done, and will do, infinitely more to change the destiny of nations and to bring about universal peace and righteousness than all the battles ever won by carnal weapons.

Oh, the wonderful possibilities that are placed at the disposal of those who, through the Spirit of all grace, have become wrestling Jacobs and prevailing Israels! This privilege, dear reader, is yours, even though your lot be cast among the poor and despised of earth and thou thyself looked upon as a worm and no man. Yet if thou hast learned to claim thy full inheritance in the Spirit of grace and supplication, thou too mayest become a spiritual force which, under God, may set in motion a glorious revival that shall turn multitudes from sin to righteousness, the influence of which, as in the case of Jacob, may give an inspiration to the prayer-life of untold millions. Volumes have been written and multitudes of sermons have been preached all down through the ages and in all parts of the world on the subject of Jacob's prevailing power in prayer and intercession. It is evident that no man unacquainted with the value and power of prayer, who lacks faith or power of intensity, can ever expect to prevail mightily with God as Jacob did. On this point one of our ablest writers remarked that Jacob in prayer became so potent that he overcame Omnipotence. He was so mighty that he overcame the Almighty (Gen. xxxii. 28; Hos. xii. 4). Nor can we deny, as stated by Mr. Spurgeon, that God had bound His own hands by His truth and His promise, "I will do thee good." This is the secret of all great prayer leaders who in the past have been mighty

through God in the pulling down of strongholds. Like Jacob, they have learnt to base their petitions upon the unfailing Word of God. May the mighty God of Jacob raise up a multitude of such prayer leaders for the present and for the time to come!

CHAPTER IV

MOSES' SUCCESSFUL PRAYER-LIFE

"And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."—Ex. xxxii. 31, 32.

NEARLY the whole of Church history furnishes us with some remarkable examples of the power of prevailing prayer—examples which should encourage us to lay hold of God's strength in the exercise of this important duty. Moreover, the Bible teems with promises which are backed up with testimonies of God's faithfulness in answer to the earnest pleadings of His people. Therefore it is possible, by these, and by the help we may derive from the following examples, to prove the omnipotence of prayer in a manner we have never yet dreamed, and should cause us thereby to let go all our doubts with regard to its reality and power.

It will be remembered, when Moses was on Mount Sinai, that the children of Israel quickly turned aside from the commandments of the Lord, and committed a great sin in that they made themselves gods of gold. Because of this, God purposed to cut them off as a nation. As it is written, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou

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broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiffnecked people" (Ex. xxxii. 7-9).

It is believed that from the moment Moses received the tidings from the Lord that Israel had sinned in making them a golden calf to worship, he became so overwhelmed with grief that straightway he began to pour out his soul to God in prayer and supplication. And so fervently and continuously did he plead and make intercession in order to avert the doom of the nation, that the purpose of God with regard to the rebellious Israelites was prevented, and the Almighty was compelled to exclaim: "Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that

I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever" (Ex. xxxii. 10-13).

The prayers and intercessions of Moses had so mightily prevailed before his leaving the Mount that the execution of divine wrath was withheld until he had gone down and become fully acquainted with the facts of the case, and knew for himself the extent of the sin: "And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. . . . And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. . . . And it came to pass on the morrow that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. xxxii. 15-30).

It is evident that while Moses had not lost heart because of the wilful rebellion of the children of Israel, yet it is apparent that his knowledge of the exceeding sinfulness of their sin had wonderfully increased his sympathy with the Almighty. In other words, he could now see what he had not been able to see before; that is, the greatness of God's goodness in not allowing His wrath suddenly to overtake them.

Furthermore, we notice that on the return of Moses from the mount, his intercession takes quite another turn. He now makes a special acknowledgment of their sin; as it is recorded, "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold." It is possible that the tidings with reference to the manner of their transgression had so surprised and shocked him, that for a while he was quite unable to grasp the magnitude of their sin. But after his going down and witnessing for himself the facts, it seemed that the knowledge of the greatness of their sin grew rapidly upon him. It must have been an unspeakable blessing to Moses that the tidings of their transgression came to him when he was upon the mount in divine communion; otherwise it is possible that he would have been completely crushed and incapacitated.

On the first occasion it appears that Moses was able to draw sufficient arguments for his intercession from the covenant of God with Israel. But what can he now say, seeing that he has witnessed for himself the fact that they had broken their covenant with God and had allowed their sin to come between Him and His covenant with them. We may ask, Where can Moses now turn for a single promise in their favour? or find a suitable argument on which to base a single petition for their deliverance? Moses is conscious of the fact that there is not a man in all Israel upon whom he could rely, or who would be accepted to join him in the ministry of intercession. Even his own brother, Aaron the high priest, had yielded to the temptation and shared in the transgression. Therefore it fell entirely to Moses to fill the gap and to find sufficient

grounds upon which to plead so as to prevail with God, and avert the nation's doom.

Here we find Moses face to face with a crisis in many respects equal to a thousand battles in one. But it is not the first time he has been put into a strait, as was the case when Israel was walled in between the Egyptians on the one hand and the Red Sea on the other. But God in their extremity made a path through the sea. On the present occasion he feels that he is walled in, as it were, with a rebellious people on the one hand and the wrath of an offended God on the other.

Already, as we have noticed, Moses had exhausted every strong argument in their favour. There is only one hope left. If that fails, then all must fail with it. That is, the hope of forgiveness in the exhaustless and unmerited mercy of a loving God. If justice requires a sacrifice before such mercy can be granted, then Moses is quite willing to give himself up as a sacrifice for their sake. In manifesting this spirit Moses was like the Apostle Paul, who in later years testified that he had continual sorrow of heart for Israel, and said, "For I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. ix. 3).

Constrained by the power of omnipotent love, Moses again pours out his soul to God in supplication on Israel's behalf and says, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." The prayer of Moses in this case was so intense that he was prepared to make the greatest possible sacrifice. He practically said, "Never mind me; put me out of Thy

promise, out of Thy covenant. Blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book, but forgive Israel their sin."

Yes, brethren, we may learn from this that real effectual fervent prayer will be sure to cost us something—possibly much. Judging from the divine record, the effectual prayers of the past have cost blood and agony and rivers of tears. Its success, however, as we have noticed elsewhere, is stamped with the divine certainty, namely, "It availeth much." This is confirmed in the Book of Psalms; as it is written concerning this event, "Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them" (Ps. cvi. 23).

Oh, to reach such a point of spiritual intercession as to be able to stand in the breach before the Almighty God, and by our intense pleading bind His wrath and hold back His omnipotent power; refusing, like Moses, to relax our hold upon the arm of God until we have conquered Him by our agonising, intensified, believing prayer!

But such prevailing prayers can be made possible only where they are steeped in the atoning merits of Jesus Christ, and where there is perfect reliance upon the Holy Spirit, who "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And when this is fully realised, and our petitions have their roots in God's boundless love and mercy and compassion, our prayers will become an irresistible force. So effectual were the prayers of Moses that Israel's sin of idolatry was forgiven and the nation's doom averted.

Yet on a second occasion, although it was more than a year later, we find that Israel, through their

own wilful rebellion, had again brought themselves under the divine displeasure and were in the same danger of being wiped out. By their constant murmurings and their slowness of heart to believe, they shut themselves out of the Promised Land. "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke Me, . . . for all the signs which I have shown among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" (Num. xiv. 11, 12).

Such an offer of promotion, coming as it did from God Himself a second time, and under such circumstances, must have been a special test to Moses. Doubtless angels, principalities, and powers were deeply interested and possibly looked on with wonder, longing to know the effect which this second offer of promotion will have upon Moses, especially considering that the future hope, or the present doom of the Israelites, wholly depended upon his decision. Moses is well aware that if he accepts this present offer, he will not only be greatly promoted, but it will completely release him from the dreary task of having to return to the wilderness, the experience of which had already vexed his righteous soul; and it is only natural to suppose that Moses will remember the former occasion, when he refused to accept the first offer to be placed at the head of a mighty nation. And with regard to the Israelites, circumstances had grown considerably worse instead of better, so that we might expect that he would grasp at this second opportunity. Surely this is indeed an awful crisis in the life of Moses, and one which compels him to act.

God's wrath for Israel's sin has already waxed hot,

and Moses is conscious that he has not a moment to lose. Notwithstanding, however, he would take time to think soberly, so as to act wisely. No doubt he feels that he must show the highest regard to Him who had condescended to make him such a transcendent offer. It is not a matter that can be treated lightly. God never throws His Gift or offers of promotion to any one. Had Moses been an office-seeker, or had he some special ambition for greatness, now was his opportunity. To have an offer of a large church with a more influential congregation, and to have the stipend doubled and trebled, falls infinitely short of an offer like this. Dr. F. B. Meyer, speaking with reference to this event, says, "There are few greater passages in the whole of the Bible than that in which Moses puts away the testing suggestion as impossible."

While the mind of Moses is reverting to the past events, he will remember the special sacrifice he willingly made for his brethren long years before, when, by faith, as it is written, "Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." He will also remember how he was graciously accepted by God as a leader and commander of His people Israel. These and many other things that had transpired during his experience with them would rush into his mind and heart in a way which is only possible for such as have passed through a similar experience to understand. Yet there can be no doubt but that the recollections of the experience Moses had passed through with them bound him to them like a three-fold cord.

But the thing which carried the greatest weight with him, and which had the effect above all others of causing him to decline the offer of promotion, was the character of God. How could he think of accepting a higher position if thereby God's character would be at stake and His Name blasphemed among the heathen. Besides this, he would hear the wailing of a nation's doom and the cry of a lost Israel. Moses knew that it was impossible for him to accept the offer that had been made him without consenting that Israel be blotted out. And what would even Heaven itself be to him, much less a place at the head of a great and mightier nation, if Israel be lost and the nation blotted out. This, together with his great regard for God's character, carried the day, and compelled Moses to decide in Israel's favour.

Herein, we believe, lies the true secret of his fervent and effectual prayers. The more we study the life and character of Moses, the more we are struck with the true greatness of his character, so that it might be said of him that which had special reference to another, namely, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." But, on the other hand, the more we study the life and character of the Children of Israel as a nation, the more we are likely to be disappointed. If we carefully follow their history we soon learn that they had sinned almost against every attribute of God and humanity. And this, too, in spite of the fact that God had wrought miracle after miracle. He had spread for them a table in the wilderness and fed them with manna from heaven. Besides this, He gave His Spirit to guide them, His mercy to pardon them, His providence to support them, and His grace to

preserve them. Yet they constantly murmured against God and against Moses and against Aaron, the Saint of God; yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word; therefore He lifted up His hand against them. But for the prayers of Moses, His servant, they would have been wiped out altogether.

We have a number of cases of self-sacrificing love given in different portions of Scripture and Church history, but, apart from the Man, Christ Jesus, there are none to excel Moses. It is because this spirit so dominated his whole being that he was ready to risk anything for the benefit of others. Moreover, we must remember that it was for a people who did not appreciate his self-sacrificing love, but rebelled against him and had also rejected him and said one to another, "Let us make a Captain and let us return to Egypt." Moses was fully aware that they were guilty of all this, and infinitely more, at the time he refused God's offer. In addition to this there yet remained the fact that God will be inquired of by Moses before Israel can entertain any hope of their deliverance. But a man like Moses, who had endured so much, who by his gentle yet heroic spirit had triumphed over so many difficulties, and had prevailed so mightily, can still be relied upon to pray effectually. But in this case, as in the former, Moses is entirely shut up to God's unmerited mercy. Therefore, he again, in reliance upon God's infinite compassion, pleads most intensely on Israel's behalf, and says, "Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I

have pardoned them according to thy word" (Num. xiv. 19-20).

No doubt it was an unspeakable blessing to Moses personally as well as to the people of Israel that he met every crisis by which he was confronted in the spirit of prevailing prayer. Because of this the exceeding great and heavy trials which otherwise would have crushed him, only had the effect of calling out the best and noblest qualities which hitherto had been deeply buried within the soul of this great intercessor.

CHAPTER V

HANNAH'S INTENSIFIED PRAYER

"And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, . . . I have poured out my soul before the LORD,"—I SAM. i. 12-15.

IT is considered that Hannah, the mother of Samuel, takes the foremost place, in the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, among women who are noted for their personal piety and fervency in prayer. Like our Divine Lord and Master when in the Garden, Hannah's prayer was wrung from a soul that was overwhelmed with grief, the burden of which had been increasing as a result of cruel mocking which she had been called to endure from Peninnah. Year by year she went up to the House of the Lord. As it is recorded, "She was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore."

Children among the Jewish women were regarded as a blessing from the Lord, and the withholding of them was looked upon as a token of God's displeasure. Hannah's disappointment in this direction, together with the constant provocations she received from Peninnah, added greatly to the trial of her faith. Yet her deepest concern was not so much that she might have a child as that she might have a soul that she could train up for God. Realising, as she did, the awful, backslidden condition of God's chosen people

Israel, it is quite possible that while encouraged by a prophetic spirit she would not consider it a thing incredible that God would give her a son worthy of filling a prophet's place, and such as would be able to restore a backslidden nation to the worship of the only true God. Under these circumstances her only resource was to go to Him in a humble spirit of fervent prayer.

We have remarkable evidence of Hannah's genuine piety in the calm and gentle spirit she manifested when she was misjudged and falsely accused by the prophet Eli of being drunk. She did not use railing accusations against him as she might have done. She was, therefore, soon able to convince him that the silent movement of her lips was not the result of strong drink, but rather it was her trouble of heart and sorrowful spirit which had led her to pour out her soul before the Lord. Nor did she go unanswered, but, as it is written, "The woman went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." So that her long night of sorrow was soon followed by a morning of joy and gladness, seeing that her heart rejoiced in the Lord.

Hannah's prayer was definite and she received a definite answer. She bare a son and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the Lord." Her prayer was intensified by her trouble, but the real secret of her success was her inward devotion and her unselfish desire in her petitions. She prayed at a point of agony, but her voice was not heard because she prayed in her heart. Moreover, she vowed a vow unto the Lord that she would give the child to the Lord all the days of his life. Therefore Samuel was conse-

crated and blessed of the Lord before he was born. "Hannah," says a noted writer, "is an instance of God's forerunning grace, the grace that blesses us even before we see the light of the world, that blesses our ancestry, our homes, parents, and kindred—the grace that sanctifies us by a mother's piety and by the prayers offered to God before she knows a mother's joy."

God's best men and women have been raised by a mother's prayers and vows, and a father's solemn consecration. Blessed indeed is the life of a man or woman, boy or girl, who has been heralded into the world not only by pain but also by prayer—their advent prefaced by the hand of a father or mother laying hold upon God.

It is said that the true secret of greatness is often traced to a mother's prayers and personal piety. Little perhaps did Monica think of what an unspeakable blessing would follow her long years of agonising prayers for the conversion of her son Augustine, and the use God would make of him in after years for His cause and Kingdom. When Moffat's mother pleaded with him to accept Christ as his Saviour, she never thought that God in answer to her prayers would fill his renewed soul with such amazing zeal for the salvation of the heathen, and crown his labours with such abundant success. It is said that John Newton learned to pray at his mother's knee, and such was the influence of her life upon his mind that, although she was called to her Heavenly Home before her son John was eight years of age, in later years, when at sea and in the midst of dangers, his agonising prayer was, "My mother's God, Thou God of Mercy, have mercy

upon me." The prayer was heard, and from the time of his conversion the name of John Newton has been honoured in the churches. It was through Newton that Thomas Scott, the commentator, was led to Christ; also Wilberforce, the champion of the emancipation of slavery and the author of *Practical Views of Christianity*, which led Legh Richmond into the ministry of Christ. President Edwards, Bishop Hall, Philip Henry, Hooker, Payson, Doddridge, and the Wesleys all had praying mothers, to which through God they attributed the secret of their success.

"When I was a little boy," said a very noted man, "my mother used to bid me kneel beside her, and placed her hand upon my head while she prayed. Before I was old enough to know her worth, she died, and I was left to my own guidance. Like others, I was inclined to evil passions, but often felt myself checked, and, as it were, drawn back, by a soft hand upon my head. When a young man, I travelled in foreign lands and was exposed to many temptations, but when I would have yielded, that same hand was upon my head and I was saved. I seemed to feel its pressure as in the days of my happy childhood, and sometimes there came with it a solemn voice saying, 'Do not this great wickedness, my son, and sin against God.'"

In a diary of a Christian mother was inscribed this record: "This morning I rose very early to pray for my children, especially that my sons may be ministers and missionaries of Jesus Christ." Her life corresponded with her piety, and her influence upon her children was blessed. Her prayers on their behalf were abundantly answered. Her eight children were all trained up for God. Five of her sons became

ministers and missionaries of Jesus Christ, and the others are well-known in the Christian Church.

It is recorded in the life of Mrs. Winslow that she determined with God's blessing that every one of her family should appear with her at God's right hand. She wrestled long in prayer; but not in vain, for she had the joy of seeing each of them brought to a knowledge of the Saviour.

No doubt such prayers as those to which we have called attention, when answered so abundantly, are most encouraging and should prove an inspiration to Christian parents to continue in prayer for their unsaved children. We must admit that the example of Hannah is by far the wisest and most successful, inasmuch as she prevailed with God on behalf of her son even in advance of his birth. That is, she had given him to the service of the Lord so that the very threshold of his life should be devoted to God in advance of the threefold enemy. Because of this, Samuel not only had a good start but an early start.

Youth in any phase is considered a period when mind and heart are most open to impression and are most receptive. But youth in Samuel's case was associated with the highest privileges, namely, the prayers and influence of a pious mother, and supplemented by the grace, power, and promise of a covenant-keeping God. Besides, his being called to minister before the Lord would afford a good opportunity for the growth and development of the germs of holy thoughts, inasmuch as his mind would be occupied with thoughts of holy things. What a comfort to know that God does not withhold His saving grace from children until they are of mature years, but rather

He includes them in His love even from their earliest moments. But it may be asked, Why was Samuel chosen from among all the other thousands of boys who were in Israel? In reply to which we would say that while we do not lose sight of God's sovereignty and His Covenant of grace, we must take into account what we have already called attention to, namely, a pious mother's prayers and her godly training. Therefore we are not surprised that it is recorded that "the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men" (1 Sam. ii. 26). Moreover, as we read in 1 Sam. iii. 19: "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." This implied that he not only grew in stature and in physical strength, but he also grew in divine grace and wisdom. Therefore he soon became equipped fully for his service for God and the state. But especially was there given to him a full measure of the spirit of grace and supplication, so that, like Hannah, his mother, he soon became mighty in the ministry of prayer. "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon the name of the Lord, and He answered them" (Ps. xcix. 6).

Though Samuel was a prophet, yet he was mighty as a Priest. Because of this he was able to bring down great blessing upon God's people, Israel. At the time Samuel was called to take charge of the prophetic office, Israel had got into a very corrupt condition. A kind of spiritual death had settled down upon the nation. It was several hundred years after the death of Moses when Samuel was called to take the place of

Eli. The priesthood had become demoralised; the people were given up to idolatry; what little religion remained was nothing more than a mere form; the spirit and power of it was gone and the glory of the Lord had departed. Under circumstances such as these, Samuel, by the aid of divine grace, set out to revolutionise things so that once more the Name of the Lord and spiritual worship might become a felt power in the land. But men and women had become so engrossed with material things, and so dead to the spiritual, that it required nothing short of the breath of the Almighty to arouse them. Samuel, however, did not fail to charge the House of Israel with having departed from the worship of the living God; and such was the wisdom and power given to him to grapple with these wrongdoings that the children of Israel were soon made willing to acknowledge that they had sinned against the Lord.

Indeed, so great was Samuel's success, through God, on this occasion that the whole city was changed by a genuine revival. "The children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth and served the Lord only." And Samuel said, "Gather all the children of Israel to Mizpah and I will pray for you unto the Lord," and it is recorded: "When the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said unto Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord:

and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel ; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel : but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them ; and they were smitten before Israel " (1 Sam. vii. 4-10).

But it must be ever remembered that the Israelites did not get the victory over their enemies until after they had a revival among themselves. It is a great mistake to think that revivals only take place among the ungodly ; for revival in the outer circles depends greatly upon the spiritual temperature of the inner circles of the Church. The revival under the ministry of Samuel was principally in answer to his fervent prayers. He agonised with God in secret before he exhorted in public. Notwithstanding the personal wrong that had been done to him he poured out his soul to God on their behalf, and his prayer was abundantly answered. It is, however, a matter of the highest importance that we recognise the fact that Samuel's prayers were associated with sacrifice. Had he not taken the lamb and offered it " for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord," he would not have complied with the conditions which are necessary to make prayer a success. All prayers, in order to be effectual, must gather their inspiration not simply from the needs of the Church and miseries of a sinful world, but also from the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Unless our petitions are based upon the merits of His sacrifice it will be in vain that we attempt to approach the Mercy-Seat. And it was not until

Samuel had offered up the lamb for a sacrifice that the Lord " thundered with a great thunder." Nor was this the only time that the elements were controlled in answer to Samuel's prayers, as may be seen in 1 Sam. xii. 18.

But the greatest blessing associated with his prayers was that they brought, as it were, a fresh vision of God before the minds of the children of Israel and therefore promoted a great moral and spiritual revival which had the effect of elevating their character and religious standard as a nation, and caused them to magnify the name of the Lord and exalt His name before their enemies. And it was said, " The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." Moreover, when Israel put away their strange gods and turned to the Lord with all their hearts, it brought manifold more power and inspiration into the prayers and intercessions of Samuel ; seeing that this act of entire spiritual surrender and absolute devotion brought the whole army of Israel into fellowship with Samuel in his loyalty to the service of God.

While it is true that one man who knows how to pray and make intercession in the Spirit has far more power with God than a whole host of half-hearted ones, it is nevertheless a glorious fact that the prayers of a sanctified host, when of one heart and soul, become irresistible. Paul the Apostle, and, indeed, all who have been great prayer leaders, have proved more or less the reality of this. And because this was so on this occasion, the Philistines came against a great army of spiritual intercessors, such as were unconquerable ; because in recognition of their obedience and fervency in prayer, the Lord Himself fought for them.

But the most remarkable thing associated with the restoration and transformation of the children of Israel referred to in the foregoing pages, is the fact that they are all to be traced to a godly self-sacrificing mother, to whom, in answer to her fervent prayers, was given a praying son.

It is said that the nine children of Rev. and Mrs. Scudder of India have given their lives to missionary service in that land—seven sons and two daughters. The only explanation is that given by Mr. Scudder: "The children were literally prayed into the Kingdom by their mother." She was accustomed to spend the birthday of each child in prayer for that child.

Many years ago there was a mother in Somerville, N.J., whose son, a young man, had begun to lead a dissolute life. One evening she begged him not to spend that evening away from her, but he declared that he would. He said, "Mother, I am not going to be tied to your apron-string; I am going to go." The mother replied, "Please try and remember every moment to-night, that until you come back, I am going to be on my knees asking God to save you." The son, with a rude gesture and muttered oath, rushed from her presence, and spent the night in a shameful carousal. It was four o'clock in the morning when he got home. He had managed to keep his mother out of his mind during his revelry. As he got to the house he saw a light shining through the shutters. Looking in, he saw his mother on her knees and heard her pray, "God save my wandering boy."

Going to his room, he threw himself on his bed, but could not sleep. After a while he arose, then knelt down, and it seemed to him that Christ's power pro-

ceeded from a room where his wrestling mother was pleading with God, and it led him to cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That very morning he was saved.

The news of his salvation soon spread in the neighbourhood, and in three weeks from that time more than two hundred young people had been converted. This young man was the father of Dr. T. De Witt Talmage.

CHAPTER VI

THE EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYERS OF ELIJAH

"And he prayed earnestly that it might not rain : and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."—JAS. v. 17, 18.

IT is evident from what is written concerning the events associated with the history of the prophet Elijah that God made use of the various trials and calamities of his time to develop in him, and to demonstrate through him, to the Church and to the world, the spirit and power of prevailing prayer.

Elias, as we are told, "was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain : and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

Again we are told that Elijah cried unto the Lord and said : "O Lord, my God, hast Thou brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn by slaying her son ? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord and said, O Lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah ;

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and the soul of the child came into him again" (1 Kings xvii. 20, 22).

The following example of the same prophet's action is no less remarkable. Faith in the divine ability to answer prayer was Elijah's supreme test by which he was able to prove in a very satisfactory manner that Israel had again fallen into the sin of idolatry, and had departed from the faith of the living God. This is clearly shown in the victory which followed the challenge given by Elijah to the false prophets of Baal. As it is written : "Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord ; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks ; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under : and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord : and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken" (1 Kings xviii. 22-24). And it is recorded : "They cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them" (ver. 28). "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of

the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (vers. 36-38).

The one thing above all others that distressed the soul of Elijah during the reign of Ahab was Israel's utter disregard of God. Through an evil heart and a false religion, they had completely lost sight of God's righteous claims upon them. Multitudes had ignored His very existence, as is always the case amidst false teachers and corrupt religions. Therefore the withholding of rain, or any other temporal calamity, however serious, would prove an unspeakable blessing if thereby it would restore a true recognition of the fact that "the Lord, He is God." The desire for this was the real burden of the prophet's prayers, as may be seen in verses 36 and 37. Neither did Elijah intercede for rain until this had taken place, and their hearts had really been "turned back again," which thing came to pass when, in answer to his fervent prayer, "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice." "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, He is God," so that we may safely say that in answer to his remarkable prayer there were more unbelievers convinced of their folly, and backsliders restored in that one day, than has ever taken place on any other occasion in the history of the world. To wit, that their hearts were all "turned back again," except the priests, who, because of the hardness of their hearts, proved themselves worthy of, as well as ripe for, immediate destruction.

This event is all the more remarkable because it is but one man against nearly a whole nation of back-

sliders. But be it remembered he was a praying man, and when a man is strong in faith and knows the power of prayer, as did Elijah, we may reckon that any such man when united with God is in the majority. Alone and yet not alone; when Elijah stepped on the scene, there was Another with him, and He was "the Lord God of Elijah." One prayer under these circumstances was quite sufficient to convince a nation of the fact that Elijah's God is the one true God; and that His Word and His Truth must be obeyed. It was because Elijah's faith and confidence were firmly fixed in Almighty God that his prayer stood the test.

The difference between Elijah's prayer and that of the false prophets was not because his prayers were intense and theirs were not. The prophets of Baal all prayed intensely, but with a wrong object and a wrong spirit. They cried aloud and cried long, from morning till noon, and from noon till eve; and, moreover, they were so intensely earnest that, as we are reminded, "they cut themselves until the blood gushed out upon them." Had any of us been present on the above occasion, no doubt we should have been greatly astonished to have heard their loud cries and to have seen the ridiculous capers which they cut, as well as to have witnessed the great amount of earnestness they put into their devotions. And this is all the more sad when we remember that it was nothing less than a fatal delusion from the beginning to the end.

The record of the above transactions and the judgment which overtook the worshippers of Baal and the false prophets are among the strongest manifestations of God's displeasure against false teachers and false religions, and should be an everlasting warning to

those who try to put other religions on a par with the religion of Jesus Christ ; virtually saying that it does not matter whether we worship Baal or Jesus Christ so long as we are sincere. Dr. A. Smellie has rightly stated that "the God of the heavens is in sharpest contrast with the idols of the nations."

In an article given in a monthly magazine published at Boston, Mass., U.S.A., the writer (with pointed reference to a visit of a popular English preacher who was accepted to preach in one of the principal churches in that city) said that "he dethroned Christ and declared that the Buddhist, Mohammedan, and, in fact, every sincere person was as sure of heaven as the Christian—we are all divine." That leaves us nothing more to say. These advanced thinkers have no regard for consistency, no regard for the Word of God, no regard for truth, but flounder about in the darkness of their own beclouded reasonings. What will the end be ? But there are a great many professing Christians belonging to some of the churches in this country who, while they would not think of praying to God after the same fashion as did the Israelites to the god Baal, will nevertheless pray to gods of their own fancy ; or to gods that they have set up in their own imaginations. We fear that there are multitudes of professing Christians in our own land who are making a god of formalism, or their religious ceremonies. Especially is this the case when they entertain the false notion that they please God and render themselves fit for heaven by virtue of their devotion to their religious observances. Thousands are constantly being deceived in a similar manner in many of our Romish churches. As rightly observed by a godly clergyman,

"They imperil men's souls now and hereafter, for the pretended priestly absolution leads men to trust in a false pardon, and rest in a delusive peace." Because of this, multitudes know little or nothing about the experience or power of an inward and vital Christianity, or the joy of worshipping God "in spirit and in truth." They go their round of religious observances day after day and year after year, and often manifest great earnestness in their devotions, yet only to find, as in the case of Baal worshippers, that it all ends in miserable failure. We admit that many of the above class have a kind of piety which has often passed muster in certain religious circles, but inasmuch as their hopes are based upon human traditions and outward ceremonies, they can never be acceptable to God.

The teaching of our Saviour shows plainly that ceremonialism substitutes the traditions of the elders for the commandments of God : the worship of the lips for the worship of the heart ; the worship of the flesh and senses for the worship of the spirit ; and substitutes forms of prayer for the true spirit of grace and supplication. As one writer has stated : "God requires soul worship and men give Him body worship : He asks for the heart and they present Him with their lips : He demands their thoughts and minds, and they give Him banners and vestments and candles."

Such, however, forget that God Himself is the only true object, as well as promoter of all spiritual worship, and because many are willingly ignorant of this, they have no right apprehension of spiritual life and power, either in prayer or in any part of their religious exercise. Nor can it be otherwise, for the reason that their minds are corrupted by false notions and

their faith, such as they possess, is centred upon wrong objects. In many cases they rely far more upon their priest and their religious observances than they do upon the merits of our Saviour. Therefore we maintain that it makes a world of difference to us at the present day, as well as to the Israelites, what we believe. In other words, it matters considerably whether our prayers and religious devotions gather their inspiration from a false religion, or from a true faith in the Lord God of Elijah.

"Your life," said the late Joseph Parker, "cannot be good if your teaching is bad. Doctrine lies at the basis of life. You may profess to believe a good many things, but in reality what you believe is the very substance and inspiration of your character." Then let us for ever banish from our minds the idea that it does not matter what we believe, or what religion we hold, so long as we are sincere and in earnest.

Moreover, the so-called sincerity and earnestness of these false teachers and their followers have failed them on different occasions when brought face to face with a baptism of fire. The test to-day, as well as in the time of Elijah, only requires to be sufficiently strong, and of the right kind, in order to prove the genuineness or otherwise of our religion. We have an example of this in the case of St. Francis of Assisi, who at the risk of his life went with some of his followers to the Sultan. "Sire," said a number of the priests of Mahomet to the Sultan, "thou art expert in the law and art bound to maintain and guard it. We command thee by Mahomet, who gave it to us, that the heads of these men be cut off." Francis, who had already by his fearless yet loving,

Christlike spirit, made a deep impression upon the Sultan, replied to him, "Your priests will not talk with me, perhaps they would be more ready to act. Have a fire lighted and I will go into the fire with them, and you will see by the results which faith is the truest and the holiest." When Francis began to speak there were a number of priests standing round him, but before he had finished they had quietly taken themselves off. The idea had filled them with horror. The Sultan, perceiving their absence, remarked sarcastically, "I do not think that any of my priests are inclined to face flames and torture for the defence of their faith."

The reason why wonders were wrought in answer to the prayers of Elijah and others of his character was because they were on the side of truth and righteousness, and fully believed in the God which answereth by fire. Oh! that a multitude of such mighty souls were raised up in our churches to-day who, by their intensified prayers and faith, were sufficiently strong to demonstrate once more before all earth and hell, that the God that answereth by fire, He is God. If this would take place, and we know of no reason why it should not, then the Church of the living God would rise up in the midst of her enemies stronger than ten thousand dreadnoughts; and would be able to pray in a manner that would bring heaven and earth together; and in the language of the prophet Isaiah would exclaim, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; and let them bring forth salvation" (Isa. xlv. 8). And such are the prayers and such are the blessings that are required at the present day in order to sweep away

the refuges of lies, and the false teaching that has got into many of the churches, and which has made fearful havoc, especially among thousands of our young men and such as are not fully established in the truth.

Judging from the Scriptures, the Church as a whole has never rightly understood the glorious possibilities placed at her disposal in the prayer-life, but which, thank God, she may understand and experience when in the fulness of the Spirit she begins to realise the omnipotency of prayer.

The cry of Mr. Spurgeon was, "Oh, for five hundred Elijahs, each one upon his Carmel, crying unto God, and we should soon have the clouds bursting into showers. Oh, for more prayer, more constant, incessant mention of the mission cause in prayer, then the blessing will be sure to come."

Rev. J. Hudson Taylor tells us of a young man who had been called to the foreign field. He had not been in the habit of preaching, but he knew one thing—how to prevail with God. Going one day to a friend he said, "I don't see how God can use me on the field; I have no special talent." His friend said, "My brother, God wants men on the field who can pray. There are too many preachers now and too few pray-ers." He went. In his own room, in the early dawn a voice was heard weeping and pleading for souls. And often through the day, the shut door, and the hush that prevailed made one feel like walking softly, for a soul was wrestling with God.

To his home hungry souls would flock, drawn by some irresistible power. In the morning hours some would call and say, "I have gone by your home and

have longed to come in. Will you tell me how I can be saved?" or from some distant place another would call saying, "I heard you would tell us here how we might find heart-rest."

The mystery was unlocked. In the secret chamber lost souls were pleaded for and claimed. The Holy Ghost knew just where they were and sent them along. Mark this: If all who read these lines would just lay hold upon God with holy violence and unconquerable persistence of faith-filled prayer, a good many things would give way against which we have been beating with our puny human wisdom and power in vain. The prayer-power has never been tried to its full capacity in any church. If we want to see mighty wonders of divine grace and power wrought, in place of weakness, failure, and disappointment, let the whole Church answer God's standing challenge: "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not" (Jer. xxxiii. 3). *We must pray more.*

And surely we have every encouragement to do so, especially in our Saviour's words, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22). "Prayer hath brought health to the sick, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and eyes to the blind, life to the dead, salvation to the lost. And hath even driven Satan from the hearts of many, and brought the God of Heaven to dwell in his room."

CHAPTER VII

DANIEL'S SUCCESSFUL PRAYER-LIFE

"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes."—DAN. ix. 3.

THE prayers of Daniel are remarkable for their earnestness, especially the one recorded in chapter ix. vers. 3-19; but we must turn to the latter part—which deals more particularly with the manner in which God undertook to answer this—His servant's prayer: "And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God: yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision, at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee: for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision."

It is the opinion of well-instructed men and Bible authorities that Daniel deserves to be placed in the front rank of the most distinguished and divinely inspired men. It is said that he possessed more of the

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spirit of wisdom and understanding than any of his time, and it is believed that he excelled all the prophets who had gone before him in possessing a greater measure of the prophetic light to foretell future events, and to fix dates. Daniel stood so high in the estimation of the king under whom he served that he "was preferred above the presidents and the princes, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king thought to set him over the whole realm." "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion or fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said those men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

There are a number of most interesting and profitable things that could be mentioned that had to do with Daniel's success in public affairs—such as his faithfulness in the presence of danger, his all-round temperance habits. When he saw that a certain course in the matter of eating and drinking was a right and safe one, he became so fixed and determined in the carrying out of his purpose that nothing could induce him to sacrifice his principles. Therefore "Dare to be a Daniel" has become quite a household phrase.

But we must not overlook the fact that the one special outstanding feature in the life and character of the prophet Daniel was his power and regularity in prayer. It is possible that had it not been for his fervency in prayer we should have heard little or nothing about him. It was because he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and made prayer and

supplication unto God that he was cast into the den of lions. It was in answer to his fervent and effectual prayers that the Angel Gabriel was dispatched from the Throne to enlighten him and to give him wisdom and understanding. Prayer was associated with his temporal and spiritual prosperity. It was in answer to his prayers that he was so graciously assisted in his power to rule and to manage the affairs of the nation, an empire of about one hundred and twenty provinces.

The success of such a man as Daniel is a standing rebuke to some of the popular but false teachers who announce that those Christians who pray will not succeed any better than those who do not, or, as one stated on one occasion: "Those who pray much do not accomplish much." The facts, however, on the part of those whose experience proves the reverse are far too numerous to mention. Tens of thousands of praying men and women have already done a glorious work for both worlds, and have borne and are yet bearing testimony to the fact that the more they pray and make supplication in the Spirit the more by far they are able to accomplish.

Bearing upon this, one noted writer says, "The great people of the earth to-day are the people who pray. I do not mean those who *talk* about prayer, but I mean those who take time to pray. . . . There are some of our friends who think themselves of the practical sort who say, 'The great thing is to work, prayer is good and right, but the great need is to be doing something practical.' The truth is that when one understands about prayer, and puts prayer in the right place in his life, he finds a new motive power

burning in his bones to be *doing*. And further, he finds that it is the doing that grows out of praying that is the mightiest in touching human hearts, and further yet he finds, with great joy, that he may be doing something for the entire world." Dr. J. R. Miller made a true statement when commenting on Jas. v. he says, "Thus prayer is put down among the active working forces of the world."

This truth holds good in the social, moral, and religious world when pervaded with an atmosphere of true prayer. It is quite evident that if Elijah had not known the power and efficacy of prayer when on Mount Carmel, nor had faith in the God which answereth by fire, all his other works, however practical, would have given him no chance whatever of success.

It is plain to be seen, both in Old and New Testament Scriptures, that the Lord has shown His approval of those who know how to pray fervently and successfully. Sometimes, as in the case of Jacob, He has brought them into a place of rulership with Himself. Joseph was a praying man and, after a considerable experience of trial and affliction, he was brought into an honourable position where he was not only able to rule over his brethren but, next to Pharaoh, he ruled over the whole land of Egypt. The same truth applies to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and many others, though not always in the same way, or to the same extent.

One very important feature associated with Daniel's successful prayer-life, and one which is vital to all who wish to be successful in the ministry of prayer and supplication, was his purity of heart and life. This we may gather, not only from the fact that his friends and enemies alike could find no fault in him apart from

his praying to his God, but also from the fact that he was able to testify: "Forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me, and also before thee, O king, I have done no hurt." Innocency is one of the strongest words in favour of heart purity that we have in the English language. The word is rendered, harmlessness, gentleness, purity of heart, of life, intense simplicity. To have testimony borne to his outward innocency was great, but to have testimony borne to his inward innocency was far greater—especially when confirmed by the Lord. It is only reasonable to conclude that his experience in this direction had much to do with placing him in a position where, under Darius, he was able to rule over a vast empire.

Yet, however, the gracious meetness and fitness produced in him through the blessing of heart purity did infinitely more than equip him for ruling in a temporal sphere, great as that was. In reality it placed him in a position where he was able, like Jacob, to rule with God in the realm of prayer and intercession, which we believe to be the mightiest ministry in God's universe. But it is unreasonable to suppose that we can enter this secret place of fellowship with God, in the prayer-life, if we allow a traitor or an idol to exist in the heart. Some one has said that "sin will make us give up praying or praying will make us give up sinning." It is evident that one or the other must keep the upper hand, and if prayer is to keep the upper hand, and be a success, then our hearts must be purified by faith.

It is possible to have a traitor concealed within the soul, the destruction of which may cost us, as it did

in the case of Samuel, a whole night of prayer before the Agag could be hewn to pieces (1 Sam. xv. 11-25). And we may rest assured that unless the Agag be put to death, the Agag will be sure to put our spiritual life to death, or so prevail against us that we can have no hope of victory. As saith the Psalmist, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." It is admitted that holiness of character lies at the very foundation of all true prayer. A well-known writer has remarked: "As a man is, so he prays. He cannot be shallow and frivolous by nature and yet pray with depth and intensity. He cannot be half-hearted or indifferent, and make superior and exalted demands upon life. He cannot with a distracted personality concentrate so as to generate force in prayer. All that is in him reacts on his praying whether he wills it or no, vitally affecting every exercise of the spirit of prayer and deciding the issue."

As was well said by the late Dr. Joseph Parker: "When the Church forgets to put on her beautiful garments of holiness, though it be made up of a thousand Samsons, it cannot strike one blow at the enemy. Count the Church by the volume of its prayers; register the strength of the Church by the purity and completeness of its consecration. If you number the Church in millions, and tell not what it is at the altar of the Cross, you return a census of a cemetery, not the statistics of a living, mighty, irresistible host. Genius is nothing, learning is nothing, organisation is a sarcasm and an irony, apart from that which gives every one of them value and force—the praying heart and the trustful spirit." These and numerous statements, according to the Scriptures, prove beyond

a doubt that the prayers that conquer and prevail, both with God and with men, have their roots in the spirit of holiness.¹

Some professing Christians we have known when brought under the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit have had such a discovery of the corrupt condition of their own heart that it has sent them to their knees with strong crying and tears, and with an agony that may be described in the language of the following verse :

"My heart-strings groan with deep lament,
My flesh lies panting Lord for Thee,
And every limb and every joint
Stretches for perfect purity."

It was when the prophet Isaiah got his remarkable vision that he was able to discover his inward depravity, and was led to exclaim—"Woe is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

The Psalmist David was brought into a similar condition when out of the depth of his soul he cried, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Circumstances like these, when under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, are very conducive to the spirit and power of intensified prayer because they bring the soul to a crisis, where one feels shut up with God, and realises that his only resource is in Him. There are very few Christians but have in some way felt a kind of solemn awe come over them

¹ A portion of this chapter appeared in *The Way of Holiness*.

when perhaps in a religious gathering they have joined in singing the lines of the following well-known hymn :

"There is sin in the camp, there is treason to-day,
Is it in me ? Is it in me ?
There is cause in our ranks for defeat and delay,
Is it, O Lord, in me ?
Something of selfishness, garments or gold,
Something of hindrance in young or in old,
Something why God doth His blessing withhold :
Is it, O Lord, in me ?
Is it in me ? Is it in me ?
Is it, O Lord, in me ?"

But this question, however solemn, can soon be answered especially when the soul becomes flooded with the light and power of the Holy Spirit. It is certain that He will not leave us in any doubt regarding this matter if only, like the Psalmist, we are willing to acknowledge our sins and transgressions.

Does the reader know anything about this experience of brokenness of heart, brought about by the illuminating power of the Divine Spirit, thereby causing him to discover the remains of the carnal mind ? Then in the spirit of love and tenderness we would say to such—do not give up in despair but apply at once to the open fountain, remembering it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." And again, "I will be found of you when ye search for Me with all your heart."

The writer has a very vivid recollection of a lady, living in the north of London, who had for some time been deeply convicted of the need for heart purity and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Her hunger and thirst for this experience became so intense that at

last she sobbed out upon her knees, "Lord, help me, and satisfy my longing soul or I shall die." Almost immediately her prayer was answered, and with a holy rapture in her soul she came to our meeting; and, to the glory of God, she testified of her deliverance and joy.

It is said that David Brainerd lived the life of holiness and prayer; therefore God the Holy Spirit could flow through him unhindered. The omnipotence of grace was neither arrested nor straitened by the conditions of his heart. The whole channel was broadened and cleaned out for God's fullest and most powerful message, so that God with all His mighty forces could come down on the savage wilderness and transform it into a fruitful garden. "Nothing," said the late Rev. G. H. C. Macgregor, "tests a man like facing God's call to complete consecration." It reveals the depth of his soul. If there be a secret lust there, he discovers it rising against his act of consecration. If he has an evil habit which he secretly loves, he hears it crying out to be spared. Yes, and if he regard the cry, or spare the sin by excusing it, or seeking to hide it, then he will fail in his attempt to be like Daniel, who was proved to be innocent both in the sight of God and his king, and possessing a character such as God Himself could rely upon.

Are you, dear reader, being brought to a point in your prayer-life, where in the presence of God you have discovered some secret sin, some sloth, some lust, some idol, or some remains of the carnal mind? Then we would entreat you not to hesitate, but in the name of the Lord God of Elijah strike a definite blow and repeat it until you are sure of a complete deliverance.

God alone knows how many of us have kept back the grace and glory and the spell of joy and freedom of the Holy Spirit, as well as loss of usefulness by (it may be) our unwillingness to sacrifice something that may be looked upon as a mere trifle. It is possible for us to admit that it is our duty to give up all for Jesus Christ, and be willing to sacrifice our lives, and beard the lion in his den, for the sake of His cause and Kingdom; and then allow ourselves to be conquered by some insignificant idol, or close our eyes to the fact that mere trifles, when given up for Christ's sake, have often prepared the way for wonderful results, the issues of which have helped to change the destiny of multitudes.

Yet we must confess that these are no mere trifles. That is, if such a word means that thereby we are prevented from the enjoyment of the Spirit-filled life, or they drag upon us in our approach to the Throne of Grace. It might have appeared but a trifling matter for Daniel to refuse to eat of the king's meat; but had he not made that little sacrifice it is evident that he would not have been chosen to stand before the king. Suppose that some of the trifles, as we call them, will not exclude us from entering the Kingdom of Heaven, yet if they hinder our usefulness they may rob us of our reward; whereas it would be like an extra heaven to us by way of reward, if as a result of some little sacrifice made by us for Christ's sake we win an extra smile from our Heavenly Father. Daniel was so devoted to the service of God that, had he been offered the whole realm of nature to turn aside a moment for a little self-indulgence, he would not have swerved a thousandth part of an inch from the straight line of

God's will. No, not even though it would have saved him from being thrown into the den of lions. It is said that a man was once asked, "Why was it that the lions did not eat Daniel?" His reply was, "Because Daniel was three parts backbone and the other part grit." Daniel's loyalty to the will of God in everything explains more than anything else the secret of his prevailing power in prayer.

CHAPTER VIII

A MOTHER'S PRAYER AND HER DAUGHTER'S
SALVATION AND HEALING

"Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me."—
MATT. XV. 25.

TRUE prayer is always strengthened by adversity, whereas prayer in prosperity is generally dry and formal. Prayers in times of affliction and trouble are often poured out like a flood.

Sometimes a Christian mother or father, when called to the bedside of a dying son or daughter, has been known to put more real earnestness into their prayers during the few moments of their soul's deep agony than they have in all their former experience. Not only so, but under such circumstances they have often proved how wonderfully the Holy Spirit has helped them to get the victory over their wandering thoughts and fickleness of mind. And as a result they have been far more definite in their prayers, and the better able to stay their thoughts upon God.

During His earthly mission in Palestine our Saviour often came into contact with severe sorrow and suffering, and, whenever the opportunity was given, He never failed to draw out if possible a spirit of earnest, believing prayer. This was so in the case of the Syrophenician woman. "And, behold, a woman of

Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, O Lord, have mercy upon me, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Her trials and afflictions urged her to plead with increasing intensity, and wrung from her agonising soul this immortalised petition, consisting only of three words, "Lord, help me." It is really one of the shortest prayers in the Bible, yet since then it has been offered up from the hearts and lips of untold multitudes of sin-burdened and sorrow-stricken souls all over the wide world. It is a prayer that is most suitable in many respects for both saint and sinner of all climes and all conditions.

Thousands of despairing souls have gathered hope and encouragement from the faith and perseverance of this woman. It was not her own sickness, it was the sickness of her daughter that was her trouble. But she made her daughter's trouble her own. Satan afflicted her daughter in a most cruel manner. As it is written, "She was grievously vexed with a devil." No doubt for a long time her mother had been at a

loss to know what to do or where to go for help. She was a poor Gentile woman, and felt that she had no right to any of the promises made to the Israelites. Yet she had heard of the Son of David, and very possibly she had cherished some hopes that she would be able to find access on the side of His love and mercy. So she came to the Son of David. She came humbly, but not hopelessly or heartlessly, and although she belonged to an outcast race she was not faithless; for it is evident she believed in God, and without a doubt on her approaching our Lord she was convinced that He was far more than an ordinary man; otherwise she would not have fallen at His feet and worshipped Him.

It is possible that this woman had far more faith than many of us have been able to recognise, especially considering that she had no definite promise to plead, which argues immensely in favour of the greatness of her faith.

It is quite true that it was the affliction of her daughter that first brought her to Him, but now that she has come she perseveres with her request until she gets all she needs. And it is possible that she found salvation and peace to her own soul, quite as soon as by her faith she was able to obtain deliverance for her daughter.

Her prayers appear to have become more intense and her faith more strong as the result of the opposition. She was repulsed on three or four occasions. It seems as if she had applied to the disciples to induce them to use their influence with the Master; but in reply to her request they only entreat our Lord to send her away, with the excuse, "She crieth after us."

Jesus was silent—"He answered her not a word." What a strain upon her faith! What is the poor sorrow-stricken soul to do, and to whom can she turn? No doubt she is tempted to think she has made a terrible mistake, that this after all cannot be the same Jesus she had heard so much about. "Where can I go?" and Satan would be ready to suggest, "Give up the struggle and return home to your sick daughter and there mourn and die together." Or he would tempt her to think that as she is not worthy of His notice it is useless to persevere and press her case any longer. But she lays hold, as it were, of the very hand that was put out to thrust her away. Truly here is a broken and a contrite spirit. Here is a soul overwhelmed with sorrow yet struggling intensely for relief. Here is a soul that feels that none but Christ can do helpless sinners good, and believes that no other being in the universe but the Son of David can solve her difficulty, and help her in her trouble. And because she believes this, in spite of every drawback and seeming denial, she continues to urge her plea, as if fully resolved she will not take "no" for an answer. Are we not already astonished at her faith and perseverance, yet the very reply she gets when the Master does break His silence only appears to add to her sorrow. He says, "I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This wrings from her soul the agonising prayer for help, so that in her deep distress she goes right to Him and cries, "Lord, help me." Surely she must have felt at the back of all His rebuffs and behind all of what had appeared to be cold indifference, that He had a heart of infinite love and compassion. Therefore, she con-

tinues to follow up with her request. "But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." Must not her heart have sunk on hearing these words? Is it possible for her faith to hold out under a rebuff like this? What is her reply? "Truth, Lord" (as much as to say, "Lord, I will not contend with Thee. I admit that I am but a poor Gentile and a dog. I am not worthy of the least favour of Thy chosen people, Israel." Thus she actually turns round the very arguments which the Saviour had brought against her as the only plea she had upon His compassion). "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the Master's table." With this answer in reliance upon His mercy her faith carries the day, and our Saviour, who up to this time appeared to have concealed His feelings, could hold out no longer.

It is considered by some that there is a great similarity between this narrative and that of Jacob at the ford Jabbok. Here is really the Angel of the Covenant, who on the former occasion wrestled all night with the patriarch; but now He appears, not in the dim light of Old Testament Scriptures, but in His visible presence as the very incarnate Son of God. It is thought that there was far more faith in this woman's application to Christ than in any other case in the four Gospels, except possibly the Centurion's. From the very commencement she appeared to have been fully convinced that our Lord was able to work a miracle upon her daughter, and the faith she possessed in this direction developed mightily under her trial, so that it soon reached a point of omnipotency and "overcame," as President Finney would say, "our

Saviour's highest willingness," so that He was compelled at last to allow her to conquer Him. And, yielding to her beseeching request, said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

We do not wonder that Martin Luther was led to exclaim with reference to this woman's faith and perseverance, "Was not this a master stroke?" Our Saviour, who had been proving her faith by allowing it to pass through the fire, knew how to support her under the trial, until her faith appeared to the honour and glory of His Grace. And then, as it were, gave her the key of His heavenly storehouse, saying, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Again the example of this woman reminds us of the blessing associated with bringing our children and family relations to the Saviour in prayer and supplication for their salvation. It is possible we may be sufficiently interested in their spiritual welfare to ask the prayers of others on their behalf, which may be quite right so far as it goes, but unless this is preceded and supplemented by our own prayers, and, as in the case before us, brought in a practical believing way to the Saviour of sinners, we can never expect to see Satan cast out, or hope for the conversion of our children. It is acknowledged, however, that the agony of soul experienced by many godly parents on behalf of their prodigal sons and daughters is indescribable. No doubt their strong parental affections have had much to do with this, especially with some Christian mothers; their love and compassion have gone on increasing until it has become like a fire that nothing

could quench. Even after years of rebellion the mother will say, "He is my boy still."

A noted writer, speaking of the power of domestic affection, says, "This seems almost the only flower of paradise that has survived the Fall." The following example of the power and intensity of a mother's prayers is very similar to the case we have called attention to elsewhere.

A godly mother was for a long time the only Christian in a large family. For years her husband and nine children manifested no concern about their salvation. The mother gave herself to prayer on their behalf, not only in a general way, but she felt drawn more especially to pray for them one by one. Soon after she adopted this plan, her earnestness for their salvation became intense; and soon evidences were given that her prayers were being answered. The first to get converted was her eldest daughter, who was followed by her two eldest sons, and successively at intervals after the same manner the whole family were brought to the Saviour. But up to this time all her tears and prayers and entreaties had not prevailed upon her husband. After much painful reflection upon his lost condition she resolved to make one final effort and then leave the case with God. She spent a whole night in prayer with such intense earnestness as she had never experienced before. In the morning she approached her husband with her heart well nigh ready to break with a compassionate desire for his salvation, and said to him, "God has given me all my nine children, but you are still without God and without hope. I have but one more request to make and then I must leave you to God. Will you

now at this moment seek the salvation of your soul ? ” This question, especially when preceded by a night of intensified prayer, came home to his soul with such irresistible force that he appeared to be paralysed and speechless. When able to find utterance he sobbed out under keen conviction of sin, “ I will ” ; and there and then resolved to become a Christian. So remarkable was the change wrought in him that it made a great impression upon the whole district in which he lived.

The Rev. G. Leavitt mentions a case which is very similar, and ought to be a great encouragement to the prayer of faith in the family circle.

A very worldly man was an object of special prayer with his wife. Her little daughter became a Christian, and very soon entered into sympathy with her mother and joined her in prayer that her father might be converted. Her faith was remarkably simple. She read the promises given in the Scriptures to the prayer of faith. “ I believe,” said she to her mother, “ father will be converted.” One evening he did not return home at his usual hour. An hour passed, two hours, her mother became anxious, then alarmed. The little girl said, “ Why, mother, he is going to come home a Christian to-night. I have prayed that he might.” The mother smiled at what she thought was her child’s ignorant simplicity. The hour grew late. Still he came not. The mother said, “ I must sit up for him.” The child replied, “ Why, he is all safe, mother. We ought to trust God and go to bed.” She went to bed. When the father came at midnight and told his wife how he had found the Saviour, and later, when they stood in tearful joy looking upon the sleeping face of their little daughter, she awakened and, seeing them,

before either could speak, with a glad cry exclaimed, “ There, mama, didn’t he come home a Christian ? ” Oh ! that we had the faith and confidence of this little child. What wonders would be wrought in the home circle. Yes, and not only would the home circle be greatly benefited by such faithful believing prayer, but many of our churches as well. The prayers offered by some of God’s people in the home circle have often had a far greater influence upon the Gospel ministry than many have ever dreamed. Even in some cases by such as are weak and greatly afflicted.

A well-known minister testified that on the evening when the first permanent impressions were made upon his mind his pious mother was detained at home. She spent the time devoted to public worship in secret prayer for the salvation of her son. So intense did she become in her intercessions that she fell on her face and remained in fervent supplication until the service had nearly closed. Her son, brought under the deepest impression during the sermon, went into a field after the service and there prayed most earnestly for himself. When he came home the mother looked at her son with a deep concern, anxious to discover if her prayers were being answered. The son showed signs of true spiritual conviction to the joy of the parents, and a few days afterwards accepted Christ as his own personal Saviour.

Bishop Jeremy Taylor remarked on one occasion, “ Our prayers upbraid our spirits when we beg tamely for those things for which we ought to die, which are more precious than imperial sceptres, which are richer than the spoils of the sea or the treasures of Indian hills.”

CHAPTER IX

OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN THE GARDEN OF GETHESEMANE

"And being in an agony He prayed the more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."—LUKE xxii. 44.

IT is quite possible that a veil of deep spiritual mystery has been allowed to remain more or less over our Saviour's suffering and agony in Gethsemane, such as only the Holy Spirit can draw aside. He alone has the power to reveal how much the victory won for us by our Blessed Saviour on Calvary depended upon the victory won during His bitter soul agony in the garden. Doubtless the battle of the Cross was first fought and won in Gethsemane. It is considered that the soul anguish which He suffered on that occasion was equal to that which He suffered on the Cross of Calvary. St. Mark says that He was sore amazed. No doubt, in a moment of time, the whole scene with reference to Calvary passed before His mental vision, so that His soul got a vivid view of the coming of a cruel and shameful death—the scourge, the nails, the torture, and the rage of men and devils—at the back of which He saw the depravity of a lost and ruined world, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

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Therefore it is possible He felt that His bodily frame would sink under the awful pressure caused by what had already been revealed to Him. Besides this, it is more than likely that a succession of new trials had been disclosed to Him with important issues reaching out into eternity. And as one after another of these overwhelming difficulties stood out before Him in battle array, He became "sore amazed," although so far He had not been attacked by either sword or spear, neither had any wounds been inflicted on His consecrated Body. But who can tell what indescribable agony was being borne in upon His divinely-anointed soul, during the moments of His reflection upon the unspeakable horror He was about to pass through. This alone was sufficient to send the cold shiver of death to the whole of His sanctified humanity, so that His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.

As admitted, all that the human frame can tolerate of suffering was to be heaped upon His shrinking body. Every misery that cruel and crushing insult can inflict weighed heavily upon His soul, and in this torment of body and agony of soul even the high and noble serenity of His divine spirit was to suffer a short but terrible eclipse. Pain in its acutest sting, shame in its most overwhelming brutality, all the burden of the sin and misery of man's existence in its apostasy and fall, this was what He must now face in all its inexplicable accumulation.

But one thing remained before the actual struggle, the veritable agony, began. He had to brace His body, to nerve His soul, to calm His spirit by prayer and solitude to meet that hour in which all that there was

in the power of evil should wreak its worst upon the innocent and the holy. And He must face that hour alone. No human eye must witness, except in the twilight and shadow, the depth of His suffering. Yet it was not the fear of death in the ordinary sense that troubled Him, but rather the feeling of forsaken-ness in the hour of His distress, and the thought of the separation of His human soul from the brightness of His Father's Countenance during the time of His awful anguish on the Cross. He had put Himself in our place and bore our sin for us, though He Himself knew no sin. Because of this He had to endure the punishment which is due to our sins and the sins of the whole world.

Then, can we wonder that the sorrows of death had sunk deeply into His stainless soul, especially knowing, as He did, that He had to die as a malefactor, and at the same time endure an inward agony that was far more deadly than death. It is quite evident, however, that it was not the thought of bodily suffering that was the cause of His great anguish. That might not have been much greater than the sufferings of many of His followers. The suffering of His soul was far beyond all human conception, so that He required the strength and comfort of the Eternal Spirit to sustain Him under the awful anguish of His sympathetic soul (Heb. ix. 14). Nor are we justified in supposing that His bodily suffering, apart from His soul agony in the Garden, was accepted as an equivalent for the punishment due to the impenitent.

This could never have exhausted the curse pronounced by the law against sin. It was in His soul rather than His body that He made atonement for

sin. Dr. Adam Clarke, Dr. Stocker, and other Bible authorities held the opinion that the principal part of the redemption price was paid in the unprecedented and indescribable agony in Gethsemane. Doubtless there is a danger lest, while we do right never to forget Calvary, we may think too little about Gethsemane. In other words, it is possible that, while we have our thoughts full of the bodily sufferings of Christ on the Cross, we may think too little about the unspeakable anguish He endured in His soul in the Garden, to wit, as it is written, "Being in an agony, He prayed the more earnestly or intensely, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." No one can rightly understand or measure the moment of deep anguish of soul that took hold upon Jesus as He lay alone on the cold, damp ground.

Many other instances are given in the four Gospels of our Saviour's prayers, but it is possible that on this occasion there was a renewal of the strain associated with His past conflicts which made itself felt in this, His soul-agonising prayer. The thoughts which had been accumulating as a result of His vision of the Cross for, approaching, thirty years had now merged into this one overwhelming struggle. It is said that the old Greek Litany has the prayer, "By Thine unknown sorrows and sufferings, good Lord, deliver us." It was indeed a grief beyond utterance, and a struggle past our comprehension.

Referring to the three disciples who were permitted to enter the Garden with their Lord, one of our noted preachers remarked, "We may go so far, with our Lord and theirs; with the greatly favoured three we may press even farther into the shades of the olives. But

even those of the inner circles among His chosen reached the impassable barrier: and reached it soon, 'Tarry ye here.' There is a point beyond which no one can go with Jesus. The deepest shades of the Garden are beyond the power of human sight to pierce. The bitterness of the dregs of His cup He alone could bear to taste. Surely those sufferings are among the things that angels desire in vain to look into. . . . The sufferings of Christ are equally a mystery to His saints. Those who were with Him could say nothing of what passed in His soul. He was far beyond them. Luke says, 'He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast.' Ah! but the distance is terrible. A stone's cast? Yes, but no human hand ever flung the stone that could reach to the far point of the inmost sufferings of Jesus Christ."

Yet it may be to our everlasting shame if, through lack of sympathy, we fail to reach the inner circle of His presence. If we were nearer to Him in our faith and love and devotion, and in true fellowship with His sufferings, we should be infinitely nearer to Him in the spirit and power of intensified prayer.

To behold Jesus alone in the Garden in agony, sweating drops of blood, is a sight sufficient to astonish angels. Yet how it must have added to His anguish as well as to their astonishment when the only one who came near enough to touch Him was Judas, under a cloak of friendship, to betray Him with a kiss into the hands of His enemies. In the three remarkable petitions offered by our Saviour in the Garden there was what we may consider a trinity of intensified prayer, the last of which appears to have exhausted His whole being. But, as recorded with reference to

this event, "He was heard in that He feared" (Heb. v. 7), which implies that all the fear and the dread He had been battling against was now removed, and an angel was sent to strengthen Him.

Surely Gethsemane on this occasion witnessed above everything else the power of intensified prayer. As expressed by the late Dean Farrar, "The disciples saw Him, sometimes on His knees, sometimes outstretched in prostrate supplication upon the damp earth; they heard snatches of the sound of murmured anguish in which He humanly pleaded with the divine will of His Father. They saw Him before whom the demons had fled in terror, lying on His face upon the ground. They heard that voice wailing in murmurs of broken agony which had commanded the wind and the sea, and they obeyed Him. The great drops of anguish which fall from Him in the dreadful struggle look to them like heavy goutts of blood under the dark shadows of the trees." But our blessed Lord Himself saw infinitely more than all others. He not only saw the bitter cup and the awful wrath it contained, and the image of a shameful death, but He also saw that His drinking of it would lead up to the salvation of myriads of precious and never-dying souls. The very thought of this took such a deep hold upon His compassionate soul that He realised that the glory which would follow would far more than compensate Him for all the suffering He was called to endure. This thought to Him became stronger than death, hell, and the grave.

It was this thought which led Him up and up to the full and glad surrender even during His awful struggle in the Garden. Inspired by this world-

redeeming plan of salvation, He was able in His agonising prayer to rise from the point of gentle submission to the place where He was able to say, as it is written, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God" (Ps. xl. 8). And by His reaching the place of the highest, and glad, submission in His prayer, He was able to triumph over every difficulty that came in the way of our salvation. This it was that enabled Him, when in the deepest agony of soul, to hold on in the conflict against sin and death, and the rage and malice of men and devils, until He had arrived at the point of final and everlasting victory.

His prayers were stronger than all the forces of earth and hell together. In answer to His prayers, strength was given Him, through the Eternal Spirit, to offer Himself up as a sacrifice for sin, through the merits of which He has obtained for us eternal redemption. In answer to His prayers, the Holy Spirit of Promise was received and shed forth on the day of Pentecost. In answer to His prayers the disciples, especially Peter, were kept from losing their faith in Him as their Messiah. In answer to His prayers, eternal security was obtained for every true believer in the Church militant (John xvii. ; 2 Pet. i. 5).

When He prayed, "He offered up strong cries and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." His life was a life of intensified prayer as well as that of self-sacrificing love. As He prayed, "the fashion of His countenance altered." We should also remember that all true prayer is centred in Him, and is all answered through Him, and in His Name and for His sake. Intensified prayer by whomsoever offered when in

reliance upon the merits of Jesus Christ cannot but prove successful.

We have cause, however, to regret that there is a very great lack of this kind of prayer in many of our churches at the present day. There are plenty of dry, soulless prayers, but very few like the prayers of Him

"Who did o'er sinners weep."

The majority of our church prayers, and we fear many of our closet prayers, too, are often cold and feeble; that is, they do not throb with the life and power of the Holy Ghost. Dr. A. Maclaren remarked that, "If we take that scene beneath the olives as explaining to us the kind of prayer that finds acceptance in God's ears, we shall not wonder that so much of what we call prayer seems to come back on our own heads." Prayer, with our Saviour, was not simply knee-drill, as we sometimes express it, but rather it was to Him the real battlefield itself. Here He had often faced His trials and conflicts in advance; and, by rightly estimating His trial and the power of His foes beforehand, He was prepared for the day of battle. Praying after this manner, He was able to get the assurance of victory before the actual crisis came. Because of this, His victory in Gethsemane was followed up with a glorious victory on Mount Calvary.

The same glorious truth regarding victories won through the power of prevailing prayer has, in a measure, been realised on different occasions in all ages. God, in other words, has never left the Church without some souls who were blessed with a remarkable power in prayer. But it may be well for us not to

overlook the fact that He has generally made use of our Gethsemanes, which may mean our losses and crosses, our sorrows and sufferings, and various trials, in order to draw out the spirit of agonising yet all-prevailing prayer.

A well-known minister recently gave an account of a young student in one of our colleges. He was a lad of great promise, with many beautiful traits in his character. He married a bright young woman, but sorrow came to his home. He first lost a little child, then his wife was taken ill, and finally the man himself was taken ill with consumption and had to leave for Africa. He afterwards wrote to his friends saying, "The night is dark, so dark. It is to me the hour and power of darkness; it is my Gethsemane. Darkness is round about His throne, but I have found God in the thick darkness." Had there been no Gethsemane agony, and no dark Calvary's bleeding victim, we should have had no salvation and therefore no Christianity. Sometimes, in order to create a fervent spirit of prevailing prayer God may give to some genuine soul a true insight into the conditions of a church, or, it may be, a nation, as represented in the valley of dry bones; and cause His servant, as He did the prophet Ezekiel, to make a thorough investigation, to unearth the sins of a backsliding people.

Dr. Bacchus, President of the Hamilton College, was upon his death-bed. The doctor called to see him, and after examining him left the room without saying a word, but as he opened the door to go out was observed to speak to his servant. "What did the doctor say to you?" said Dr. Bacchus. "He said, sir, that you cannot live more than half an hour." "Then

take me out of bed and place me on my knees. Let me spend that time in calling upon God for the salvation of the world." His request was granted, and thus his last moments were spent in praying to God for the salvation of poor lost sinners.

CHAPTER X

THE UPPER-ROOM PRAYER-MEETING OR THE PROMISE FULFILLED AND APPLIED

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren."—ACTS i. 14.

"THE Apostles' commission to preach," says Mr. Bounds, "was a blank till filled up by the Pentecost which prayer brought."

It would be impossible to enter fully into details with reference to the disciples during the ten days' prayer meeting in the Upper Room. But we cannot doubt but that their minds were filled with the subject they had heard so frequently from their Master's lips, namely, the coming of the Comforter. It is only natural to suppose that this would have the uppermost place in their minds, and therefore in their fellowship and prayers. And the more they prayed and conversed with each other, the more abundantly the truth concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit would grow upon them, until they would soon realise that, apart from all the other objects that might suggest themselves, the personal indwelling of the Comforter alone made it worth their while, a thousand times over, to wait for its fulfilment. And we may rest assured that there was not a single statement made by our Lord

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in relation to the blessing that would follow the fulfilment of the Promise, that they did not turn over again and again in their minds and make mention of in their prayers. Especially would they think of the words He uttered, namely, "He, the Spirit, shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." No greater inducement than this could have been given them to wait for the gift of the Comforter. It is said that when our Lord took His departure, that He left the world without a single record except that which was written upon the hearts of His disciples. But they required something stronger than their own memory to keep in mind the Saviour's words and rightly to understand them so as to be able to convey to others their true meaning. Doubtless the impressions made upon their hearts and minds under our Lord's ministry were deep and lasting, and such as they could not very well shake off. This, however, was not sufficient. Quite likely they felt convinced that they would be called upon to bear witness of all that Jesus said and did, both to friends and foes, and also transmit them for the benefit of generations to come: and this would be utterly impossible unless they received their full inheritance in the gift of the Comforter. These and numerous other thoughts concerning what they had heard from the Saviour with reference to the grace and glory contained in "the promise of the Father" would crowd in upon them while they waited together, so that there would be no lack with regard to matter for prayer.

The happy company that had obeyed the call to tarry in the Upper Room had already received the spirit of adoption and discipleship so that the one

special object for which they waited was that they might be endued with power from on High. They required this above everything else in order to bear witness of Christ and to publish the glad tidings of His salvation, and until they had obtained this power they were not to take a single step in that direction.

The late Rev. W. Arthur, in calling attention to the condition of the disciples before Pentecost and their need of a season of waiting in the Upper Room, said, "There we see men whose commission had come from the lips of the Lord Jesus, whose training had been under His own eye, who had forsaken houses and lands and all that could bind to secular avocations, who are ready to set forth upon the work of calling and warning a world that is lying in the arms of the wicked one. And yet day after day the inhibition is upon them that they are to tarry until they are endued with power from on High." As we look upon that spectacle—sinners dying, time rolling on, the Master looking down from His newly ascended Throne on the world which He has redeemed, while His servants keep silent, there is in that silence that which booms through all the future, warning us that never, never, under the dispensation of the Spirit, are men to set out on the embassy of Christ, be their credentials and qualifications what they may, until first they have been endued with power from on High.

The desire of these disciples, realising as they did the great need of the Pentecostal Gift in order to meet their present and future responsibilities and to prepare them for their anticipated triumphs in the Master's service, must have carried them to the loftiest peak of spiritual expectation. "When suddenly there came

a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Hence while they all were praying and believing that it would come, the power fell which Jesus promised should come down.

"Nineteen hundred years ago," said the well-known Joseph Cook, of Boston, U.S.A., "one hundred and twenty obscure men and women of an obscure nation were met together in an Upper Room at Jerusalem waiting for the enduement with power from on High. And in the might of that enduement they went forth and lifted the old world off its hinges and brought in the new world with all its glories."

The principal thing which enabled these early disciples to accomplish such mighty things was the fact that the enduement of the Holy Spirit of Promise brought them into the experience of a better priesthood. In the place of the Levitical Priesthood which existed under the Old Covenant God raised up a royal priesthood of all believers whereby, through the indwelling and intercession of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were lifted into the place of fellowship with their "Great High Priest" and were able to rule with Him in the ministry of prayer and intercession—"made kings and priests unto our God."

The late Dr. Monro Gibson was right when, speaking of this royal priesthood of all believers, he said: "Let the Church not only claim but exercise its prerogative as a royal Priesthood: and how soon shall the gates

of brass be broken in pieces and the bars of iron be cut in sunder; how soon would the crooked places be made straight and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord revealed and all flesh see it together."

The mighty works which followed the ministry of the disciples after Pentecost (as we shall discover in the following chapters) set the seal of God upon the great purpose for which this unspeakable gift of the Holy Spirit was bestowed, and we are fully persuaded that no object of less importance than the coming of the Comforter and the expectation of the grace and glory that would follow, could have held together one hundred and twenty people for ten days "all of one accord" (see Acts i. 4 and ii. 1).

This being the case from start to finish, there was nothing to prevent their perfect agreement in prayer, or to obstruct the one definite object they had in view. That was to receive "the Promise of the Father." And we feel justified in stating that a right cultivation of the spirit of expectancy among true Christians is quite necessary at the present day, that is, when in prayer for the purpose of obtaining any definite experience or blessing in harmony with the Scripture. The late Dean Vaughan of Llandaff remarked: "Has God no sign for His people? Has worship no sign of acceptance? Is there nothing corresponding to the Altar flame? Yes, there is an inward peace flowing from divine communion, a flow of faith and comfort of love, and joy of hope by which the Spirit Himself bears witness."

And it is evident that the Apostles and early disciples had such witness borne to them. Hence the Apostle Paul declares that "we might know the things that

are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12). However, we must not lose sight of the fact that faith in Christ and His Word, apart from all outward signs and inward feelings, is the one great safeguard against error. Our Lord said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." There is a danger in our day lest our prayers may have in them more of the element of curiosity than of true faith. If the Apostles prayed for great and mighty things it was because they had a great and mighty faith in the Almighty God. This being the case, together with the fact that they were sure that they prayed on right lines, it mattered little to them if hell itself dropped across their path. They had faith and courage enough to overcome it, or to pray their way through it. The nature of their faith was such that it "would not shrink though pressed by every foe, nor tremble on the brink of any earthly woe."

Another important matter which is very necessary for the obtaining of our full inheritance in the gift of the Comforter is that of meeting in fellowship with Christians who are fully agreed to wait upon God, with the one definite object in view, namely, that of prayer for a special infilling and outpouring of the Spirit of all Grace. Thousands of Christians have testified that whilst they have received much blessing in other respects when alone with God, yet in the matter of prayer for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they were more successful when in prayer and fellowship with others who were like-minded with themselves. No doubt that Chrysostom had proved the reality of this when he remarked: "What we cannot obtain by solitary prayer we may by social. How so, because

where our individual strength fails, there union and concord are effectual." There are, we admit, some exceptions to this—as in the case of the Apostle Paul, and also in later days, such as President Finney and D. L. Moody, and others we might mention. Yet we have to confess that the majority of believers receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit after the example of the upper-room meeting. We could supply a sufficient number of cases to fill a volume; to wit, that when Christians have met in prayer for the purpose of obtaining a personal Pentecost, there have been results of a similar nature to that which took place with the early disciples, and such as have led believers to exclaim, "Truly this is Pentecost over again."

For the encouragement of some earnest seekers after this experience the writer would call attention to one very gracious season of this kind which took place during one of his later visits to the United States. After a short mission in East Providence, he proceeded to Louisville, Ky. At the close of his first mission in that city, two of the ministers came forward and asked him if he would address their ministers' meeting in the centre of the city. The writer took this as the Lord's leading. He was conscious during the address that prayer was being answered, and that the message was being carried home. The result was that he was asked to prolong his visit. He therefore continued to give addresses for about three weeks each day except Saturdays, chiefly on the Person and Work and filling of the Holy Spirit. When partially through the series, some of the ministers present suggested that it would be advisable, if possible, to arrange for a half-night of prayer, so as to allow sufficient time to wait upon

God for the Spirit's fulness. This was agreed upon. On the occasion the ministers came up in good force full of the spirit of expectation. As one after the other prayed, we felt assured that God's Presence was in our midst. As the meetings proceeded, the prayers became more intense, especially as the whole body of ministers poured out their souls to God on behalf of the churches, the States, and the world. At this stage the writer felt that the time had arrived to call attention to the fact that important as it was to pray for the outside world, if we were to have real success under the present circumstances, we must be definite in our petitions with regard to our personal experience.

It would be unreasonable to expect God to fill us and to make us channels of blessing to others, unless we were first willing to have our own hearts purified. Realising that the gracious influence of the meeting was such that the most heart-searching truths could be applied without giving the slightest offence, the writer stated as plainly as possible that any sign of carnality cherished in the heart would block their path to the pentecostal fulness; that our own judgment should be sufficient to convince us that we must be willing to be emptied of all that was evil or sinful before we could expect to receive the fulness of the pentecostal gift. At this point the writer was more than surprised to witness the instantaneous manner in which the Holy Spirit wrought the conviction in their souls that purity of heart was a necessary condition to welcome the gift of the Comforter. In a moment they started to pray for forgiveness of past failures in life and service, beseeching God with cries and sobs for a complete deliverance from all sin, and continued

thus in earnest prayer and supplication until just after the turn of midnight—when suddenly the Holy Spirit fell upon the meeting in such an indescribable manner that, to a man, the ministers present rose and shouted as they embraced each other, "The Comforter has come!" "The Comforter has come!" "The Comforter has come!"

Some who were old and grey-headed and had been in the ministry for upwards of fifty or sixty years appeared to be quite transfigured. One of them came forward to the platform and embraced the writer, exclaiming, "Brother, the Comforter has come!" The sight was sufficient to cause Heaven to rejoice, a sight such as the writer is quite unable to describe. Of course, we all perfectly understood that the Comforter had been received of the Father, and shed forth by Jesus Christ upon His waiting disciples about nineteen hundred years ago, but the mistake was that He had not been given a hearty welcome by them before, because of His not being fully recognised; and possibly because some had never rightly understood that it was their privilege to experience a personal Pentecost, which makes a world of difference in the matter of present-day Christianity. The baptism of the Holy Ghost brings Pentecost up to date, and to the believing soul an enlarged vision of the glorified Saviour. It was quite evident that this was the case with all those upon whom the Spirit came at our midnight prayer-meeting; for, like the early disciples, they all began to magnify the name of the Lord Jesus. Moreover, the spiritual power and influence received on this occasion were followed by a special increase of divine unction in their prayers. As was well said

by Dr. S. D. Gordon, "We are never really men of prayer in the best sense, until we are filled with the Holy Ghost."

One of the most interesting as well as encouraging features at the close of the above meeting was the fact that, no sooner had these ministers received the fulfilment of the Saviour's Promise than some of them confessed how sorry they were for having entertained unkind thoughts of their brethren in the ministry who had taught the doctrine of sanctification or the blessing of "Perfect Love."

In setting forth the conditions for receiving the gift of "Power from on High" the present Bishop of Liverpool says, "We must use the means by which this strength is appropriated—solitary prayer for the individual, united prayer for the Church. Who of us has not felt the weakness, the unreality, the cowardice that spring from the want of solitude with God? And solitude has been the nurse of all the strongest spirits the Church has seen. In solitary prayer Our Lord Himself drew strength to meet every crisis of His life on earth. The wilderness, the mountain, the garden witnessed His lonely wrestlings with His Father. In this restless and busy age most of us live too much in public. We spend our spiritual strength and forget to renew it. We multiply engagements and curtail our prayers. By an error of judgment, or perhaps by the subtle force of inclination, which we mistake for necessity, we work when we ought to pray, because to an active mind work is far easier than prayer. And then God cannot bless. We lose in calmness, in depth, in strength. We grow feeble and shallow, and distracted; the work is done,

but superficially, and will not stand; the ring has gone out of the message, and the lip has lost its power. The servant whom the Holy Spirit is to use must resist the tyranny of overwork. He must resolve to be alone with God even if the hours spent with Him appear to rob his fellow-men of his service." The Bishop also gives a trumpet call to the duty of united prayer, and tells us we need to wait upon God together as did the first disciples.

"If, to-day, there went up to God a like earnest and faithful cry for power—power for holiness, for service, and for suffering, and with it . . . the needful condition of submission to God's will . . . a current of spiritual life would run through the parishes of our land, which would be felt in its effects at the very ends of the earth."¹

¹ Booklet by Bishop of Liverpool, entitled *Power from on High*, published by Daily Prayer Union Depot, Histon, Cambridge.

CHAPTER XI

APOSTOLIC PRAYER-LIFE IN FULL OPERATION

"And when they prayed."—Acts iv. 31.

IN some of the former chapters we have considered the wonderful effects of prevailing prayer under the old Covenant, and how some were permitted by it to enter into the Council Chamber of the Most High; and had the privilege to rule with God over nations and peoples. But the power and wisdom to rule and govern nations and peoples, as in the case of Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, may fall to the lot of but few. Yet it is possible that the exceeding great and precious promises, given in the new Covenant, embracing as they do the unspeakable fulness of our baptism into the spirit of grace and supplication, carry with them far greater possibilities in the prayer-life. This is no other than our Saviour led His followers to expect. We repeat that He gave to the ministry of prayer the highest possible place in His service, as in John xiv. 12-15.

These early disciples, having accepted their full inheritance in the Pentecostal grace, were soon able to prove that not one jot or tittle of His word had failed them, with regard to the results which should

follow the fulfilment of the Holy Spirit of Promise obtained for them by His sufferings and death on the Cross. What can be more interesting and inspiring than a careful study of the glorious victories won in answer to the faithful, fervent prayers of the Apostles and early Christians, as recorded in the Book of Acts? Nor was it just an occasional triumph over some special difficulties which they had to face in any one direction, but rather it was a constant irresistible march of victory in every direction. Their prayers and their faith carried all before them. They were like an army of irresistible warriors. Nothing could stand before them. The Church, says one, is irresistible for the purpose of her great mission when armed with the power of prayer. The whole power of imperial Rome, then mistress of the world, proved unable to resist the power and influence of their intensified prayers.

A king once led forth his steel-clad cavalry to place a despotic yoke upon the neck of a free people. Just before the battle, he saw the ranks bending to the ground. "See," he cried, "they submit already." "Yes," said a wise counsellor and one who knew better, "they submit, but it is to God and not to us." And in a few hours afterwards the king and his army were scattered.

Let the Church, as she stands face to face with opposing forces, submit to God in prayer and every foe will be vanquished. The success of our Saviour's early disciples was so remarkable that tidings of it spread abroad in every place. Their faith had taken such a hold upon God and His promises that no foe was too strong, no difficulty too great, nothing

really appeared impossible to them. They prayed down conviction on every town, village, and place they entered; and heard the cries of the penitent for pardon and salvation on the very spot. Thus they witnessed for themselves the power of the Gospel in changing hearts and lives of repentant sinners under their own ministry.

In answer to their prayers the lame man was made to walk and to leap and to praise God. Multitudes of others were saved and healed of their maladies and out of weakness were made strong. Also many of those who were possessed of devils were delivered. When they prayed and made supplication unto God the hearts of kings and rulers were made to tremble, and dead souls felt the spiritual vibration and were quickened into newness of life. In answer to their prayers, bolts and bars gave way and prison doors flew open, and captive souls, as well as bodies, were set at liberty. In answer to their prayers many of the corrupting systems, like that of Baal, tottered and fell. In answer to their prayers, friends and foes, men and devils, were made to realise that God was on the field and that victory was sure. So rapid was the spread of the Gospel under their ministry, plunged as it were into the Spirit of grace and supplication, that shortly after Pentecost populous cities were turned upside down, and soon the ancient beliefs of the Roman Empire were overthrown, and the very Throne of Nero shaken; and others who followed in their train prayed so intensely that by its power and the ministry of the Word, they shook the known world and compelled the master of legions to cast his crown at the feet of the world's Redeemer.

Speaking of the success of the Apostolic prayer-life, the Rev. J. Shirley says, "The earthquakes were God's amens to the songs and prayers of His servants." Indeed, it is hardly possible to read the Book of the Acts without recognising the fact, that greater works were more fully accomplished by their ministry of prayer than by any other. Therefore if the Lord withheld from these early disciples the temporal power to rule and govern nations, He gave them something infinitely better and far greater; and that was power whereby under God they were able to rule multitudes of souls into His Kingdom. Moreover, in answer to their prayers, God gave them power to rule out the spirit of hypocrisy, and many other foreign elements such as false doctrine and corrupt literature, and much evil that was of a soul-destroying nature.

The numerous events which took place in answer to the prayers of these early Christians, as recorded in the Book of Acts, have caused tens of thousands to stir themselves up and to take a fresh hold upon God. These despised and persecuted Galilean fishermen and others, the foremost of whom was so poor that he had not a coin to give the lame beggar, were Heaven's Princes, and joint rulers with their Lord in the great realm of spiritual intercession. It is true that in the first place they had received the grace and the power to rule their own spirit, and to have victory in their own souls, and because of this they were able to glorify God by influencing others to have fellowship with them in the same Heaven-ruling, God-controlling power. And we have not the slightest doubt but that our Lord intended that His Church should have continued on these lines until she had developed a

nation. Yes, a kingdom consisting of a royal Priesthood, to enjoy unbroken fellowship with Him in the ministry of prayer and intercession. Oh, for a million of wholly devoted souls that would step out fearlessly before a godless world and a half-hearted Church, and offer themselves as candidates for this glorious ministry! But in approaching Him, let such remember the Master's words, namely, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent taketh it by force." And indeed this is one special feature in relation to the prayers and intercessions of the early Christians. Their prayer-life was not spasmodic or made in fits and starts, sometimes blowing hot and sometimes cold, but rather as we find them in the first prayer-meeting in the opening chapter of Acts, so they were on every occasion. When they prepared for Pentecost they continued in one accord in prayer and supplication. When they would select one to fill up the place of Judas, they prayed. When they received three thousand into the Church at Jerusalem, they all continued steadfastly in prayer. When Peter and John went up to the Temple, it was at the hour of prayer; and following close upon this we read that the whole company lifted up their voice to God with one accord.

From first to last the spirit of prayer seemed to grow upon them. They prayed in the Temple, they prayed in the prison, they prayed in the Palace, and they prayed in the cottage. They prayed everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. "We are learning to read the Acts of the Apostles in a new way," was the expression used by one of our ministers; "not as past history only, but as a guide to

the Churches, and individuals, under the power of the Spirit." It is evident, however, that the Apostles considered prayer to be their chief employment. They gave themselves to prayer, and as a result they succeeded; and, God be praised, the same privileges and possibilities in the prayer-life are placed at our disposal, especially if, in reliance on the Holy Spirit, we enter into it with the same intensity of soul as did the early Christians. Bearing upon this point, the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse remarked: "We have seen in our day what has been called an attempt to go back to primitive customs in the Church. We can do nothing better if only we go back far enough. I find no controversy about vestments, no going to law about attitudes, no mystery of the Mass, but I find prayer constant everywhere. The primitive Church was born in a prayer-meeting, and in the prayer-meeting she renews her strength. The prayer-meeting is the thermometer of the Church. It tests what degree of warmth there is. The prayer-meeting is the barometer of the Church and points to showers of blessing or seasons of drought. The Churches' warming apparatus is the prayer-meeting room. The light that is, comes that way. A praying Church is a mighty, prosperous, resistless Church. He helps the Church most who sets himself to make the prayer-meeting most largely a success."

While it is evident that the Apostles never lost sight of the importance of any Christian duties, but took them up and carried them forward and put them into full operation, whether it was preaching, witnessing, giving, or any other duty; neither did they allow any Christian doctrine to be overlooked or neglected.

Yet none of these in Apostolic estimation was compared by way of necessity with that of prevailing prayer. It is admitted that their most arousing words were uttered to impress upon the Church the reality and power of effectual fervent prayer. Their one chief object was to keep the Church alive to this duty.

In calling attention to genuine Christianity, or the Church whose members know how to prevail with God in prayer, the late Bishop Ryle said: "This is the Church which does the work of Christ upon earth. Its members are a little flock, few in number compared with the world. One or two here, two or three there, but these are they who shake the Universe. These are they who change the fortunes of kingdoms by their prayers. These are they who are active workers for spreading the knowledge of pure religion and undefiled. These are the life-blood of a country, the shield and the defence, the stay and the support of any nation to which they belong."

It is said that the natural world is full of mighty forces which are labouring for our weal. But the fact is, had we but sufficient faith to grasp it, forces are labouring for our weal in the spiritual realm that are infinitely greater than those that exist in the natural. So much greater are the privileges of those who are living this side of Pentecost, above those who lived on the other side, that if we only knew the power and reality of prayer in the Holy Ghost, as we should do, we should soon discover that we have placed at our disposal the key that will open to us an inheritance of spiritual force, "the exceeding greatness" of which, in answer to our prayers, may operate upon a galaxy

of worlds, and change the eternal destiny of multitudes of immortal souls.

The question is being asked, How is it that these natural forces, which are manifestations of the power of God, so absolutely obey man? Is it not because man has so diligently studied and so absolutely obeyed the conditions under which they work? Obey the law of force, and the force will obey you; so "God gives the Holy Spirit to them who obey Him." It has been affirmed that all the resources of God are treasured up in Jesus Christ. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Obey Him and He will pour out such mighty energy through the Spirit that men will be amazed at the prodigality of its supply. This fact is made blessedly possible, especially since our Glorified Lord received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, which was shed forth by Him so abundantly. Consider also that the gift which He so freely bestowed has never yet been exhausted. The skies are still full of Pentecosts. The great need is for men who know how to prevail with God so as to bring down the pentecostal showers upon the Church and the world. Here lies the secret of carrying forward the apostolic prayer-life in full operation, as well as all the other ministries of the Gospel.

During the last few years, multitudes have been overwhelmed with surprise at the mighty forces that have come into operation in the natural world. But it is possible God is only waiting for His people to render absolute obedience to the Laws of His Spiritual Kingdom, and He will then overwhelm His Church with astonishment by putting into full operation all

His mighty forces on her behalf. But in bringing this to pass it is possible that He may take us by surprise in the spiritual realm, as is often the case in the natural, that is, by manifesting His power through some very humble agents. In other words, it often comes to pass that such as the good Bishop Ryle designated, "the life blood of a country, its shield and defence," are to be found in the most humble walks of life—yes! even amongst some of those who are the most poor, infirm, and bodily afflicted.

President C. G. Finney and D. L. Moody and many others have acknowledged that, under God, they owed far more than was possible to describe to the prayers of some bedridden saints for their success in the Master's service. It is evident that in this ministry, as well as others, God often makes use of the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. How surprised we shall be if, in the near future, we discover that some mothers and fathers in Israel are princes and rulers with God. They really, though now compelled (in some cases) to live in the cellars and garrets of some of our city slums, are doing far more to promote the cause of Christ and the salvation of heathen England by their agonising prayers than many who week after week fill long columns in our newspapers.

"Our ideas of prayer," says a prayerful writer, "are coloured by our limitations. The Word of God views prayer in its unbounded possibilities. A man of eloquence may touch multitudes; the man of prayer touches God. Eloquence may pass away without permanent results. Prayer in the Spirit, prayer that lays a hand upon the Throne and knows how to con-

centrate upon a recognised need, sets in motion spiritual forces which will influence others far and near."

"Prayer," says the Rev. W. Huntington, "uncloses the bountiful hand of God—opens the door of mercy—retains Christ on the throne of the affections, and covers every rival and usurper with shame and confusion of face. It is the believer's Royal Exchange, where he may take his cares, burdens, snares, and troubles; his vexations, temptations, doubts, and fears; his misgivings of heart, sorrows of mind, hardness of heart, and ingratitude—together with his faintness, unbelief, spiritual jealousy, and rebellion; also all his disorders—the leprosy of sin, the evil within, the plague of his heart; or his languid hands, halting feet, or stiff neck. He may there take all his oppositions, persecutions, false charges, slanderous accusations, vile reproaches, and there get rid of and leave them all."

It is also an encouragement to know that the power of intensified prayer in the Holy Ghost is opened to all believers in every age who will take time and thought for the practice of this duty. In the booklet we referred to, written by the Bishop of Liverpool, he calls attention to "that mighty spirit of the Middle Ages, Bernard of Clairvaux," and says, "that he found, on the days when he spent most time in prayer and in study of the Bible, his letters were most rapidly written and persuasive; his active work the most quickly and successfully accomplished, and his own schemes were widened or lost in the greater purposes of God; anxiety allayed, and the power of the Holy Ghost, to which he had opened his heart,

was felt in every word he spoke, and in his very presence and look."

The question often asked us is, "What is the best means to adopt in order to create or promote the spirit of earnest, intensified prayer among God's people?" In the first place, we would say it is a matter of the highest importance, as well as a help in this direction, to study carefully the example of our Lord Jesus Christ as given in the Gospels. After the same manner, study the example of the Apostles as set forth in the Book of Acts, and the Epistles. The result will be that prayer will soon be looked upon as the chief business in the service of Christ, and thereby many will be encouraged to claim their full inheritance in the Spirit of Grace and supplication.

What can be more distressing, when one is called upon to conduct a mission, than to be unable to find half a dozen, or even two, who know how to offer a word of prayer in public? In some cases the condition of things is deplorable. On one occasion a minister said, "I am indeed sorry to have to confess that I have not a single member in my church who knows how to offer up a word of prayer in the mission, without the Prayer Book." Then can we wonder at the dearth of conversions and the great decrease of membership when prayer-meetings are ruled out or put at a discount? Some one has said that "a training home or college, to instruct the disciple of Christ how to pray successfully, would do far more to promote true piety and true worship and sound preaching than all the theological schools, important as they are in their place."

CHAPTER XII

PRAYER ANSWERED BY A MIRACLE

"Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God."
—Acts xii, 5.

OPPOSITION, persecution, trials, and afflictions in various forms are often used of God to create a spirit of fervent effectual prayer. So, whatsoever God may see fit to use, if it should only have the effect of leading our souls into closer union and fellowship with Himself, and enable us thereby to realise more fully the power and efficacy of prayer, it cannot but prove a blessing. No doubt it is chiefly for this purpose that Christians are often called to suffer persecution from the enemies of the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is plainly to be seen how it had its effect in the experience of the early Church. A moment's consideration with reference to Peter's imprisonment will be sufficient to lead us to conclude that circumstances could hardly have been worse or more trying to the faith of the apostles and early Christians. The voice of the enemy was heard on every hand. The powers of earth and hell were fully combined in their efforts to take Peter's life and crush to death the infant Church. This being the case, what possible hope can this feeble band of disciples entertain concerning Peter's deliverance? What can they

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do in the face of a hostile host, with the bloodthirsty Herod at their head to urge them on? Had he not stretched forth his hand and caused James, their brother in the Faith, to suffer a cruel death? Besides, Herod has already made his plans and has cast Peter into prison and sealed his doom, and has given out the sentence that to-morrow he must die. Therefore the Apostle is left a helpless prisoner. But there is a silent yet mighty force put into operation on Peter's behalf which neither Herod nor any of his army of persecutors had counted upon. "Many," we are told, "were gathered together praying" (Acts xii. 12).

These few words like a mighty searchlight reveal to us the fact that this small band of disciples had entered into the Throne Room. In other words, they had cast themselves upon God and held on at the Throne of Grace in agonising prayer until they had obtained a power which is infinitely stronger than all the forces of earth and hell together. It is written, "And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off his hands. . . . And he, Peter, went out and followed him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord has sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from the expectation of the Jews" (see Acts xii. 11-14). Thus was Peter set at glorious liberty, and was soon able to convey to his brethren his own

personal testimony of the wonderful deliverance God had given to him in answer to their believing prayers.

This narrative is often used to illustrate the state of a sinner, but we are fully convinced that it has an important lesson for the Church. No doubt Herod felt quite confident that if he could imprison Peter and James, who were leaders of the early Church, he would soon stop the progress of this little band of disciples. And is not this a lesson for us at the present day? The enemies of truth and righteousness have just the same spirit of hatred towards those who are the followers of Jesus Christ. Although their modes of attack and methods of procedure may be very different from those of apostolic times, yet their object is ever to cripple and overthrow if possible the faith of those who are the recognised leaders of the Church, and thereby hinder the progress of the Saviour's Kingdom.

It is evident that the introduction of the world's theories into the Church in relation to Materialism, Rationalism, Darwinism, Scepticism, etc., has hemmed in a number of our Church leaders just as really as Peter and others were hemmed in by Herod and his material forces. Because of this, the Church in many respects has been shorn of her strength, and become as sapless as the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision. Not only so, but the false doctrines and infidel theories have brought a kind of spiritual stupor over multitudes which has rendered them as insensible to their danger as was Peter, when fast asleep, to the hostile forces that had bound him with chains. There is only one resource left, and that is prayer; and, God be praised, this is a sure remedy when rightly applied, as in the case before us. Prayer was answered in the case of

the prophet for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the valley of dry bones, which brought a new influx of life and spiritual vigour to the people of God. In answer to prayer the Holy Spirit was given, which brought a mighty avalanche of power to the Church at Pentecost, and made her as terrible as an army with banners, so that the gates of hell could not prevail against her.

So likewise prayer, as we have already seen, in spite of difficulties and persecutions, was answered in the case of Peter. Think of the purpose of Herod to kill—the feeling of pleasure it would give to the Jews—the chains to hold the prisoner fast—the being thrust into the inner prison—the strong Roman walls—the iron gates and the guard of soldiers—what can one do with such multiplied safeguards? *Hold a prayer-meeting!*

"But prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." Nor are we confined to sacred history in order to prove the power of prevailing prayer. This will be seen in the case of Martin Luther and the Reformation, and in that of John Knox, who by his prayers shook Scotland. As already mentioned, prayer gave birth to the ministry of the early Friends (known as Quakers), and the early Methodists, and the Salvation Army, and numerous missionary enterprises and Christian endeavours.

Some modern thinkers would have us believe that prayer does not operate in the realm of the supernatural, or in the sphere of the miraculous. But God does not say so, neither do the Scriptures, and it is certain that facts, as in the case of the text, as well as Christian experience, are fully on the side of God and the Bible. There are others who, without spiritual enlightenment, try to invade the domain of the in-

visible and the infinite, but only to fall farther back into infidelity and materialism, and then tell us that there is nothing in the boundless universe except matter and physical force. But the power of intensified prayer has proved a force that has penetrated the innermost chambers of the Most High and moved the arm of God, who, by His almighty power, has lifted the prayers of the righteous above the realm of intellectual doubt and difficulty, and in answer to their request has brought a wave of spiritual blessing over the Churches. Oh! that God would raise up a body of men and women to-day who know how to enter "the secret place of thunder" (Ps. lxxxi. 7), roll back the darkness of superstition and error, and set at liberty those who are fast bound by infidel theories and endless forms and ceremonies, and give a new impulse to the ministry of prayer and intercession.

"There is a viewless, cloistered room,
As high as heaven, as fair as day,
Where, though my feet may join the throng,
My soul can enter in and pray.

One hearkening even cannot know
When I have crossed the threshold o'er;
For He alone who hears my prayer
Has heard the shutting of the door."

The above narrative discloses to us one other important lesson, and that is the duty of the Church to pray for her ministers. It is possible that many of our leaders and ministers are just as much overwhelmed and crushed by numerous cares, such as pastoral burdens and financial difficulties, and other matters relating to the Church, as are others by the introduction

of false doctrines. The writer will not soon forget a very touching testimony given by a minister during a mission in the north of England. Said he: "For a long period I had been the subject of severe trials, connected more or less with the church, so that I felt strongly tempted to give up the ministry altogether. During this experience, however, I had occasion one afternoon to call at the church. While there, I heard voices in the vestry, whereupon as I opened the door I saw a band of devoted Christians met in prayer together on my behalf. Such was the effect upon me that I felt lifted completely above my difficulties into quite a new atmosphere. And, God be praised, we have had spiritual prosperity ever since." We firmly believe that if the Churches of to-day prayed intensely for their ministers as in the Apostolic age, they would experience a glorious march of spiritual triumph over all their foes. It is the opinion of some that the church in Acts xii. did not fully wake up to the power and possibility of prayer until after James was put to a cruel death, otherwise he too might have been saved. Be that as it may, we are quite convinced that Peter's marvellous deliverance in answer to prayer has been an inspiration and source of encouragement to tens of thousands of God's believing people in all ages.

Perhaps this has done more than anything else to encourage the followers of Jesus Christ to look upon their troubles, trials, and persecutions as affording a great opportunity to prove God's faithfulness in the time of deep need; and to bring out the best that is in them. After this manner the power of prevailing prayer has been kept alive more or less among all true Christians in all ages, and in almost

every part of the world. In the year 1798, when Ireland was in a state of rebellion against England, some discontented spirits in County Wexford thought that was a favourable opportunity to take their revenge upon a small settlement of Moravians dwelling in the district. They had long threatened to make an end of them. When would they get a better chance? The Moravians expected some such attack, and resolved to trust in God and not in their own strength and weapons. They gathered in their chapel, and with earnest prayer besought the Lord to be their shield in the time of danger. The attacking party drew near; they expected to meet with great opposition, so they prepared for butchery and the wildest excesses, but instead of this they beheld those whom they had intended to slay on their knees before God. They heard their earnest prayers for protection and, stranger still, forgiveness and pardon for their intending murderers. When their songs of praise rang out in the still air, there was not one in all that furious band who would raise a hand against them. They stayed all that day in the settlement. They, with one accord, departed without having injured a single individual, or having stolen a single article. Thus did God answer prayer and protect them. And we are fully convinced that the great need, not only of Ireland, but of many other countries, in their present state of unrest and discontent is a few spiritual princes who know how to prevail in the ministry of prayer and intercession.

Our weal or woe as a people or nation, as did theirs, depends entirely upon our reliance upon the Almighty, and if we fail to rely upon Him and His truth and righteousness, all our talk about diplomacy, ingenuity,

and military efficiency, or our improved plans, etc., whether religious or otherwise, will not prevail; but like the Israelites of old, we shall be brought under. The most religious nations and countries of the world, if they have restrained prayer and ceased to have vital union with God, will soon become formal and carnal, covetous and envious of each other, until, as in many cases, they are consumed one of another. "From whence come wars and fightings among you," saith the Apostle (Jas. iv. 1). All such wars as are the outcome of bitter envy and strife are nothing else than hell let loose. But if, by the power of prevailing prayer, we are able to shut up such a hell, if but for a week, we shall have accomplished something that will far more than compensate for all our agonising petitions at the Throne of Heavenly Grace.

Undoubtedly prayer is the mightiest weapon and an almighty force in itself. It gives life and force to all, and the Lord God Omnipotent will make all things possible in the prayer-life of those who truly believe. The following is a remarkable example of the liberating power of fervent effectual prayer. Mr. Foster, a godly gentleman of Charlestown, was with his son taken by the Turks, and the barbarous prince in whose dominion he had become a slave was resolved that in his lifetime no captive should be released. When the friends of Mr. Foster heard the sad news, they concluded that all hope was gone. Upon this a Mr. Elliott, who had remarkable power with God in prayer, addressed the throne of Grace, in the presence of a large congregation, in very plain language. "Heavenly Father," said he, "work for the redemption of Thy poor servant Foster, and if the prince who detains him will not, as

they say, release him as long as he himself lives, Lord, we pray Thee remove the cruel prince and glorify Thyself upon him." In answer to this singular prayer, Mr. Foster quickly returned from his captivity and brought an account that the prince who had detained him had come to an untimely death, through which he had been set at liberty.

On the eve of a battle more than two centuries ago a thoroughly devoted minister, the Rev. John Flavell, was full of anxiety in view of the danger that threatened many of the seamen who belonged to his parish. They were about to engage in a fearful battle with the French, and be exposed to the perils of the fight. With a yearning heart he called his people together and appointed a day for fasting and prayer that the Lord would cover their heads in the day of battle. And it is said that the good man wrestled in prayer as in agony, and as a prince he had power with God and prevailed. Not a single sailor from Dartmouth was lost, though many of them were in the hottest part of the fight.

On different occasions Satan has tried to overwhelm some of God's children by waves of domestic trouble and affliction, as in the case of Job, or discourage them by various provocations and disappointments. Others he has tried to dishearten by the treachery of some supposed friend. Should he fail by any of these means, it is possible that he will attack the soul by some sudden or secret temptation which may take the form of some sinful pleasure; perhaps by a special temptation to unbelief. But whatever may be the form of attack we receive from the subtle foe, the object is always to prevent us from becoming successful

in the ministry of prayer and intercession. But under circumstances like these, believing souls are led to cry mightily to God. And their petitions, when offered up through faith in the atoning merits of Christ, have often obtained immediate deliverance. And the Lord who knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation knows also how to control it so as to foster the spirit of prevailing prayer and thereby leave the soul the better and the stronger for the experience.

It is not, however, God's intention that we should depend upon persecutions and afflictions or various trials and temptations in order to foster the spirit of prevailing prayer. But if as individuals or as a Church we allow ourselves to become careless, or cold, or half-hearted in our prayers, or degenerate into a lifeless formality, then it is possible God may consider the above means indispensable in order to arouse us from the state of lethargy into the spirit of effectual fervent prayer.

CHAPTER XIII

"ONE OF YOU"

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."—Col. iv. 12.

SAID the late Dr. Parker: "I do not know that Epaphras was an eloquent preacher, but he was mighty in intercession. He threw his arms round his native Church, and toiled in prayer for them until his brow was bedewed with agony, and his whole face lighted up with saintly expectation that he might see the descending blessing."

What a mighty, irresistible force the Church of God would become in the world if she had within her ranks a host of spiritual intercessors like Epaphras; and, like him, knew how to labour always fervently in prayer. The Church would then learn to regard this ministry as the indispensable thing, and the one thing above all others that can prevail with God for blessing, to build up saints and secure power in the Holy Ghost, which enables believers to bear witness of Jesus Christ to a godless world (Acts i. 8).

Intensified prayer through faith in Jesus Christ has done more to revivify the Church after years of spiritual declension than any other force on earth. In answer to the intensified prayers of Martin Luther, God raised

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up a standard of truth against the flood of error, and restored to the Church the doctrine of justification by faith, which had so long been buried beneath the corruption of superstition and priestcraft.

In answer to the intensified prayers of Wesley and his devoted followers, the Lord restored to the Church the power of Apostolic Christianity, and enabled her members to testify once more to the Spirit's witness of an inward experience of both justification and sanctification which is by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 1; Acts xxvi. 18). The doctrines of the Reformation, which through loss of spiritual unction had become but little more than mere theory with many, soon became a glorious reality in the experience of multitudes, the tidings of which rang out to the ends of the earth; and this at a time when, as we have been reminded by the historian, religion was at the very lowest ebb. Most of the great dissenting bodies, during the early part of the seventeenth century, declined in numbers as in energy. One shrewd observer branded the English of that day as "the most lifeless in Europe." The greater part of the prominent statesmen of that time were unbelievers in any form of Christianity, and distinguished for the grossness and immorality of their lives. Yet under circumstances like these there burst forth a religious revival, which in a few years changed the whole temper of English society, and restored spiritual life and activity to the Church.

It was in answer to the intensified prayers of a consecrated few in '58 and '59 of last century that the Lord poured out His Spirit and shook a great part of the continent of America, and arrested its moral

and spiritual degradation, at which time the whole country was on the very verge of a volcanic eruption of vice and political disaster. Yet, however, the Spirit of grace and supplication wrought so abundantly in the souls of a few genuine believers that very soon most of the preaching services were turned into prayer-meetings; and, under God, there was put into operation a chain of prayer reaching over two thousand miles in length, resulting in the greatest revival known since the days of the Apostles. So great was its power and influence that the inspiration of it flashed across the Atlantic Ocean into the very heart of Ireland, and found a lodgment in the souls of a few devoted Christians, who received the tidings in the joy of the Holy Ghost; and fully believed that, what God was doing in answer to prayer in America, He could do for them. And very soon, in answer to their agonising prayers, the Lord poured out His Spirit and shook the north of Ireland, and inaugurated a blessed revival which did more to restore peace and contentment and promote the cause of peace and righteousness in that country than all the combined military forces.

We are persuaded that more depends upon the manner and spirit in which we receive the tidings of a revival than we have ever dreamed. It is possible that failure, through lack of sympathy on the part of many of our Churches with the late Welsh revival, supplies a reason for the spirit of decline which followed, as well as the departure from the faith which has taken place in our country during the past few years. It may also explain to some extent the reason why the revival in Wales, blessed and wonderful as it was, did

not accomplish all that we hoped it would, or possibly all that God had intended it should. May the Lord increase our love and appreciation for signs of spiritual awakening so that we may be always ready to hail a revival.

It is likewise true that intensified prayer gives spiritual vitality to preaching—admitting that preaching was a great feature in the revival which took place in the days of Wesley and Whitefield. Yet no one can deny that it was their intense praying which gave them such remarkable power and unction in their preaching. They were mighty in preaching because they were mighty in prayer. Bearing upon this point, a writer to *The Way of Holiness* says:

"Pentecost was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer, and not the result of preaching. The sermon of Peter followed the descent of the Spirit, and was merely an explanation of the spiritual manifestation as seen by the convinced multitudes who stood trembling with fear."

There is reason to believe that the same kind of tarrying in the 'upper room' would bring like results as at the beginning, for God has not changed. It is evident that many would rather preach than pray. This, no doubt, accounts for much of the dry, unctionless preaching we are sometimes forced to listen to even in holiness meetings. The man who prays is the man who moves God and brings down the pentecostal power.

It is evident that the secret of Peter's great success on the Day of Pentecost, next to the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, was the fact that he was surrounded with an atmosphere of prayer. The same

thing is true all through the history of the Church. The preachers, whom God has honoured the most in the ministry of reconciliation, are men who have been the most mighty in the ministry of prayer and intercession—men who have prayed intensely, often with unutterable groanings. Again, the power of intensified prayer gives vitality to individual soul-winning. A great many of God's people have never been called to preach from pulpits, but very few, if any, who are truly converted, can make the excuse and say that they have not felt the call in some way or another to pray for the conversion of individual souls, and for wisdom to lead them to saving knowledge of the truth. And perhaps one of the most important things in relation to this duty is an enlarged conception of the value of a single soul. With reference to this, a well-known preacher calls attention to a verse of one of the greatest Christian hymns, namely :

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul . . ."

That is to say, my soul is a greater and bigger thing than the whole realm of nature. Do you believe it? I agree that it is the most romantic of all beliefs. It affirms that the soul of every forced labourer on the Amazon is of more value than all the mines of Johannesburg, all the diamonds of Kimberley, all the millions of all the magnates in America. It affirms that in God's sight all the stars that people infinite space are together of inferior worth to one human spirit, dwelling it may be, in the degraded body of

some victim of drink or lust, or some member of the gutter population of a great city, who has descended to his doom by means of the multiplied temptations with which our society environs him. It is a romantic creed, but, if it is not true, Christianity is false.

Epaphras, who is "one of you," which may imply that he was not only one of their Church or class, of their kith or kin, but a man of like passions, one of the same original stock. And though it is evident that at this time he stood high in the ranks of Apostolic Christianity, yet it was not because of anything in himself, apart from the Grace of God, that made him to differ from the others about him. Therefore, with a slight alteration, the words, "one of you," may be successfully applied so as to inspire others with the thought that what God has done for one, He is able and willing to do for others. Especially will He undertake to do great and mighty things in answer to fervent believing prayer. We may meet a company of prodigals steeped in sin and become habitual blasphemers, and say to such, "John Bunyan was 'one of you,' but he sought and obtained mercy, and in answer to believing prayer God gave him the ability to write the *Pilgrim's Progress*, one of the best known books in the world next to the Bible."

We may visit a camp of gipsies and tell how Cornelius Smith, who was one of the three converted gipsy brothers, and father of the present Rodney Smith, the successful evangelist, sought and obtained mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ; and that God, in answer to their united prayers, so changed the outlook of the gipsy world that their regeneration is no longer looked upon as a thing impossible. Indeed,

prayer so wonderfully changes the condition of things that we may have the courage to approach a gang of thieves and say to them, "Ned Wright, who was 'one of you,' sought and obtained mercy through faith in Jesus Christ, and became a successful evangelist, and was used of God in turning a multitude from darkness into light and from sin to righteousness." Or we may visit a company of bootmenders, and say, "William Carey, was 'one of you,' and he sought and obtained mercy, and after receiving the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, joined the ranks of intercessors, and soon developed such remarkable gifts that by his preaching and writing abilities he set in motion a work in India which, under God, will continue to grow and multiply to the end of time." We may visit some of our business houses of the same craft, and say to the salesmen behind the counter, "D. L. Moody was 'one of you,' and he sought and obtained mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ, and soon became a flaming evangelist; and God, in answer to his, and the prayers of thousands of others, used him in bringing upwards of a million souls to the feet of Christ."

We may pay a visit to one of our Scotch factories, and say to the young female workers at their looms, "Mary Slessor was 'one of you,' and she accepted Jesus and joined the ranks of intercessors, and became a mighty missionary in heathen Africa; and by her consecrated life thousands of sin-stained Africans were brought to the Saviour." In like manner we may pay a visit to our colleges and training homes and mission halls, and discover that among them are many truly devoted students of the Word, and say to such, "Epaphras was 'one of you,' and he gave himself

continually to prayer and to the study of the Word" (though possibly at that time, in the eyes of many of his brethren in the Church at Colosse, he was only looked upon as an ordinary disciple or one like themselves, able to pass muster on the roll of membership). Yet because of his intensified prayers and intercessions in God's sight, Epaphras may have counted for a thousand, yea, a million, of some ordinary Christians.

The Burden of his Agonising Prayers.—According to the statement of the Apostle, the sole burden of the prayers of Epaphras and the purpose for which he laboured and agonised so intensely was for the blessing of their entire sanctification. Hence Paul speaks of him as one who was "always labouring fervently that they," the members of the Church at Colosse, "may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

We may gather from the above prayer that Christians who are wholly abandoned to God and filled with the Spirit of grace and supplication will have a longing desire for the conversion of sinners, such as no doubt was the case of Epaphras, especially at an earlier stage of the Church at Colosse. We may take it for granted that he had prayed just as earnestly that they might be rooted and grounded in the first principles of religion and that they might have the witness of the Spirit to their acceptance with God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet if the prayer of Epaphras in this case means anything, it means that our responsibility is not ended when sinners are converted and born again, but rather we must pray more intensely, as did Epaphras, that those who have already accepted Christ "may stand perfect and complete

in all the will of God," and continue to pray until they get the assurance of it.

Jonathan Edwards, who lived a life of true Christian devotion, so laboured in prayer that it is said that he wore the hard wooden boards into grooves where his knees pressed so often and so long. After a special season of communion, he exclaimed, "The heaven I desire is a heaven of holiness!" And it is a comfort to know that such a heaven may have its commencement on earth. This is what our Lord meant when He taught us to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." This, no doubt, is what led the Scotsman to say, when asked if he had a desire to go to Heaven, "Why, man, I live there!" It is a very mean idea that some hold, namely, that if they have enough of religion to take them just inside the gates of Heaven they will be satisfied. Rowland Hill remarked on one occasion with reference to the above class that if it fell to his lot to carry such to Heaven he would slip them down just inside the door and slink away, ashamed of his job.

It is evident that so long as we give place to the carnal mind which we are told is at enmity with God, so long shall we have that within us that will hate God and resist the Holy Spirit, and will strangle our very desires after holiness. Therefore, in order to be always able to labour fervently in our prayers, like Epaphras, that those who are already believers may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, we ourselves must not allow anything carnal or selfish to come in to hinder the intensity of our prayers. Had the beloved Apostle John cherished anything within his breast that was doubtful, he could never have

been able to testify, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight" (1 John iii. 21-22). No man can really pray above the level of his own experience. It is therefore certain that Epaphras enjoyed the blessedness of harmony with all the perfect will of God. As a result, his prayers reached a point of holy intensity. No soul that clings to carnality or to the mind of the flesh can ever expect to enter the Throne-room of divine intercession and pray effectually on behalf of others. Such souls will be bound and fettered by carnal limitations.

We may rest assured that Epaphras fully recognised that next to conversion or the new birth, it was a matter of the highest importance that the members of the Church at Colosse should be wholly sanctified. Nothing less than a desire that they might enjoy this experience would have caused him always to labour fervently in prayer that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God; and we may be certain that unless our experience of holiness measures up to that of the prayer of Epaphras, it will not reach the standard of Apostolic Christianity; and if through disobedience we fail in this, there will be a lack of spiritual force and holy intensity in our prayers which means that there will be a loss of power and influence in our prayers and intercessions on behalf of others.

The agonising prayers of the late Reginald Radcliff often sent a thrill of holy joy through the souls of a Christian assembly, and arrested the spirit of carnal criticism among some religious professors by bringing down upon them an avalanche of spiritual power. And on some occasions, when the temperature of a

religious meeting was far below zero, it was lifted under the influence of his prayers into an atmosphere of heavenly love, the spirit of which spread like fire among dry stubble, with a holy fervency that has consumed all the leaven of hypocrisy and religious formality, and led to a genuine revival of primitive Christianity.

Time fails us to speak of such men as Praying Johnny Smith, Stoner, Sammy Hicks, Joseph Spoor, George Müller, founder of the Children's Orphan Homes, Bristol; Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission; Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, or General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army—all of whom were raised up from ordinary stations of life, yet of whom it may be said, through the prayer of faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, changed the destiny of nations and became mighty through Him in the pulling down of strongholds. All through the history of the Church, God has been filling up His ranks of intercessors, not so much from the great and mighty of the earth as from among the poor and despised followers of Christ. And we may expect that in the future He is going to form His exceeding great and mighty army of intercessors not from among those who consider themselves wise and prudent, but from among those who know how to worship Him in spirit and in truth, and who know how to pray in the Holy Ghost; and because such know how to prevail with Him in the power of intensified prayer, they know how to take His kingdom by spiritual force. Therefore, it does not matter whether such souls are to be found in the ranks of the Salvation Army or any other branch of His service. They are the souls God is on

the look out for. None else need apply, for only such as have taken the trouble, like Epaphras, to learn the secret of prayer, will God take into rulership with Himself in the ministry of prayer and intercession.

And surely there was never a greater need than at the present time for men and women of God to plead earnestly that once again the Church of God may prove that prayer is the great force which is to live and triumph in the experience of men, and the power by which the Church on earth shall have victory over all her foes, until Christ shall subdue all things unto Himself.

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